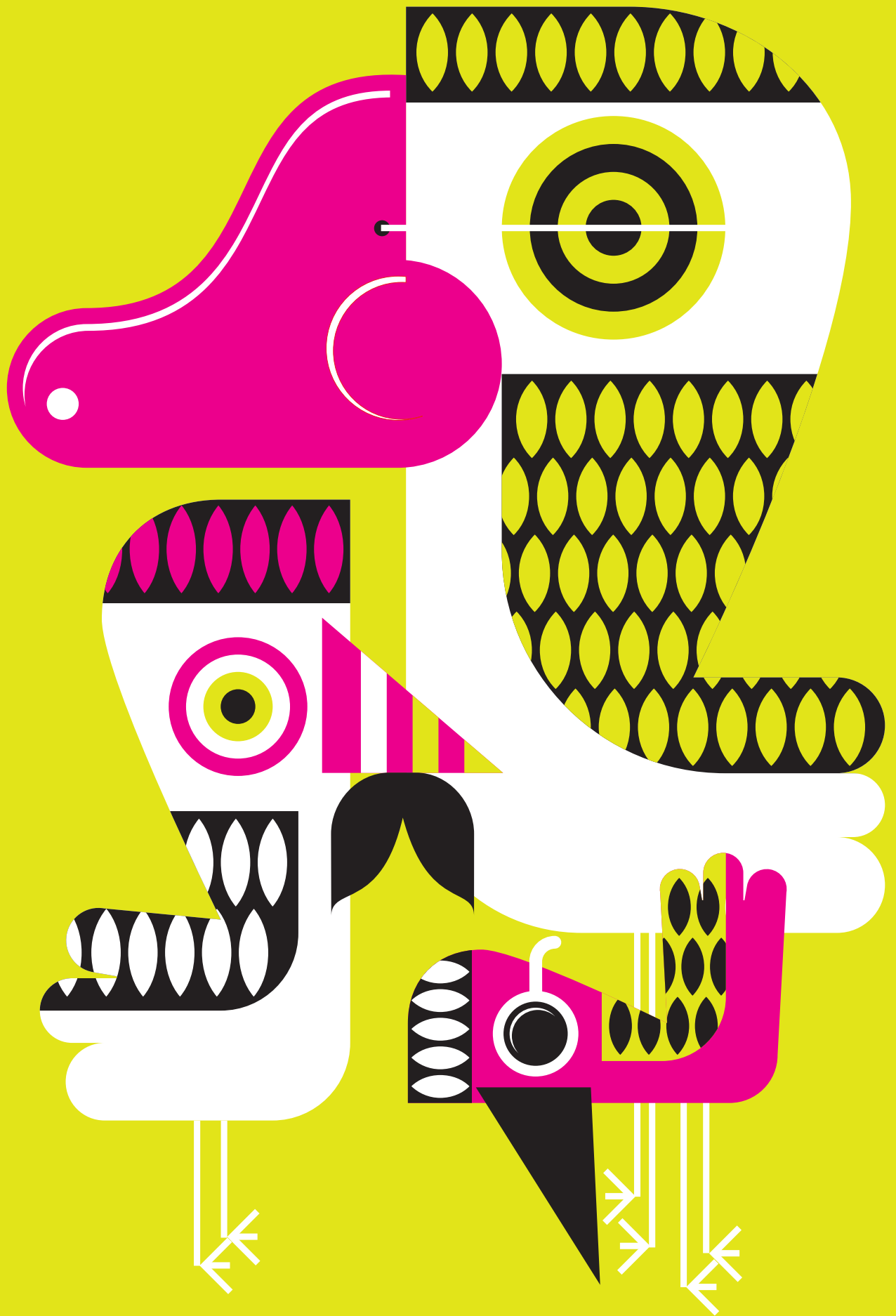




NOW THEN.

MICK MARSTON. SPLIFF POLITICS. BNP WIVES.
A MAGAZINE FOR SHEFFIELD. ISSUE 21. FREE.

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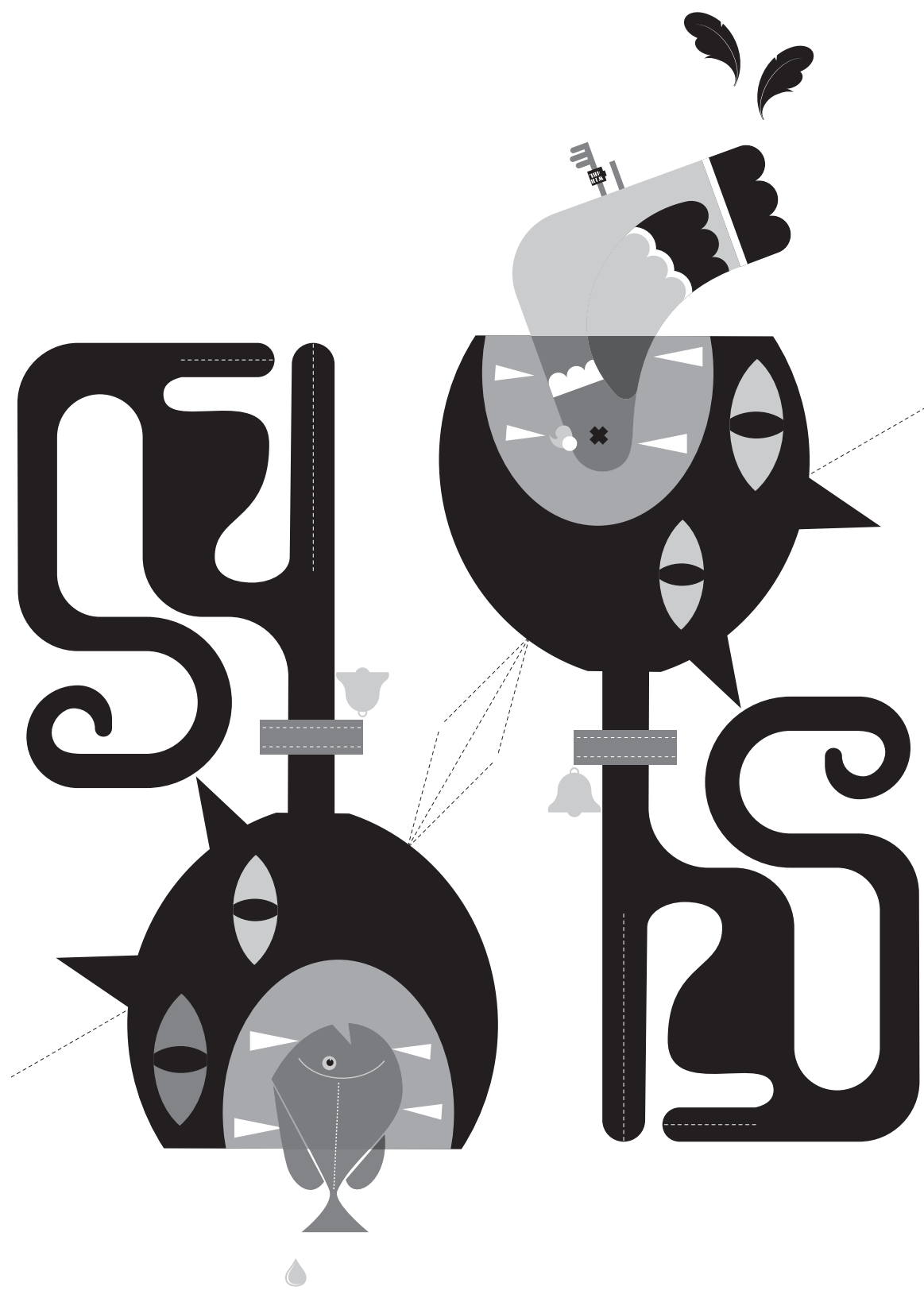
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EDITORIAL.

AS ANOTHER YEAR COMES AND GOES, SHEFFIELD FALLS UNDER THE DARK BLANKET OF WINTER. BUT FEAR NOT, FOR THE WARMTH OF HUMAN KINDNESS WILL WARM US ALL.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us this year – readers, writers, musicians, artists, advertisers. It really means a lot. We have big plans for 2010 but they wouldn't be big if we didn't let them gestate a little longer.

I recommend you read Doug Pyper's opinions on the dismissal of Professor David Nutt and the future of the ACMD on page 16. Our interviews this month are with Andriana Triana and Jon Gomm. You can also find insights into housing co-ops, the Big Issue and BNP wives in NT21.

Most importantly, buy your Christmas wares from Sheffield traders. Turkey from the local butcher, veg from the corner grocer - not Tesco. Explore places like Rare and Racy for unique gifts that show that special person they are worth more than a five-minute online shopping session. These might seem like small things, but they are essential to our economy. We're all feeling the pinch so let's help each other out.

Happy Christmas, peace on earth, love your brother etc etc.

SAM.



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LOCALCHECK.

THE BIG ISSUE IN THE NORTH.

KAT COUSINS.

ROB TELLS ME HE WAS THE FIRST PERSON TO SELL THE BIG ISSUE IN THE NORTH IN SHEFFIELD, BACK IN 1995. IN THOSE DAYS THERE WASN'T AN OFFICE IN SHEFFIELD, SO HE HAD TO TRAVEL TO LEEDS TO GET COPIES OF THE MAGAZINE. NOWADAYS HE HAS WORKED AT NEARLY EVERY PITCH IN THE CITY, AND CURRENTLY HAS A REGULAR SPOT WHERE HE HAS MADE MANY FRIENDS.

There are two reasons why you might want to buy the Big Issue magazines. Firstly, it prints decent articles. Secondly, it offers people who are homeless or in vulnerable housing the opportunity to earn regular income and take their life in a new direction.

The system is pretty simple: a vendor buys the magazine for £1, sells it for £2, and gets to keep the other quid. There is definitely no such thing as a “typical vendor” – people involved are in a variety of situations, with a range of issues. However, one thing you could say that all sellers have in common is that they want to make a change in their lifestyle. Selling the magazine is not an easy option, as it requires a certain level of commitment.

The Big Issue in the North office in Sheffield covers South Yorkshire, with around 30 to 45 vendors selling the magazine actively. The staff at the office provide additional support, mainly in the form of referrals or advocacy work. Other activities are paid for by the Big Issue in the North Trust.

I learnt a lot about the magazine talking to Rob over a cup of tea he bought me in the supermarket café. He told me that selling the Issue is something he enjoys doing, mainly because of all the different people he meets and the friends he makes. As a more experienced vendor, Rob also supports other vendors in the city. For example, Rob approaches venues or stores to “open up” new spots for other vendors. This is particularly important given the competition in the city centre for spots, which is much smaller compared to the Leeds city centre. Looking to the future, Rob has now got plans to set up his own business which, thanks to the friends he’s made, he’ll have a lot of support for.

From January next year, the Big Issue in the North is starting a series called “The Big 12”, with a theme for each month to raise awareness about the issue of homelessness and show the vendors in a positive light. January’s theme is “music night”. Go to the website to find out more and if you don’t buy the magazine already, give it a go.

bigissueinthenorth.com

COUNCIL AXE.

WE NEED TO GET RID OF THIS DIVIDE.



A TALE OF TWO CITIES.

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A METAL CITY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LAND. METAL WAS BROUGHT FROM NEAR AND FAR TO BE MELTED, HAMMERED, SHAPED AND SHINED. THE METAL CITY WAS AN UNCEASING, UNBREAKABLE WHOLE.

Many worked in mile after mile of factories that huddled massive around the thud of hammers as heavy as houses and furnaces spitting fire towards the sky. The factories churned out tools for the building of far cities, or bombs and guns for destroying them. Others worked within a jungle of small sooty windows, in and around the city. Filing and tapping and cutting metal into cutlery and kit. These artisans, crafting with spirit or just mucking through, owned their tools and hours of work. Sometimes this meant struggle; sometimes they thrived.

In the Metal City the difference between ‘worker’ and ‘employer’ was small. They saw themselves as not so different. While a few had large fortunes, there were also few struck down by poverty. Even as the factories grew, and people poured into the city in search of work, all were rewarded decently for their labour. All had a part and a place, and knew of each other and of each other’s concerns. The Metal City was a city of makers, of creators, of builders: a city of workers; a city of equals.

Over the years, the city grew as the world needed feeding with ways to build or destroy, and shrank when the world quietened, always knowing each season would pass. But then the far cities began to work metal, and the people there were hungry and lean. So the people in the Metal City worked harder and made metals that would resist water, ignore time, or had enormous strength. But the far cities still grew and the Metal City saw that its time might be ending.

A Glorious Queen then came to rule over the land. The Glorious Queen looked at the workers of the Metal City and offered just cold rhyme for their efforts: “It is survival of the fittest in which I believe, and you seem unfit to me. Repression is the only lasting philosophy, the dark deference of fear and slavery.” So she did not protect the Metal City and the workshops faded into rubble and the factories were invaded by silence.

As the workers stopped, slowly but surely, the great Metal City split apart.

It had been happening for some years. Factories had grown in one half of the city, so the owners and the wealthy moved to the other side of the city, as if their city was different from the one of the workers. As each one moved, so a crack began to form along the length of the city. At first, it was smaller than could be seen, but when the factories and workshops closed, a chasm opened and the Metal City was split in two.

The workers told stories to the young of the great Metal City, of fire and metal, of knowing all around you. But the young, who had no great factories or small workshops, nothing to build or create, soon tired of the tales. The fire in their eyes burned bright, but the fire had nothing to create or make, so it burned away inside, turning their heart to clinker and their blood to ash. It was years until people found work again, serving in shops, cleaning or selling things that other people had made. The Low City was born: grey faces lost without knowing their part or place in the world.

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Some who had served the Metal City were now the masters of their world. This was the High City, where great ivory towers of knowledge grew, hospitals sprang up, and bureaucrats multiplied. They found themselves rulers of things, but the fear of the Low City coming for their wealth, fear of losing their young to the clinker and ash, hardened their hearts and made them brittle and rusted.

Some waited for the Metal City to be reborn, but it could not be. The mechanism of the whole, the one city, having been broken, could not mend itself. The elders put on ceremonies and dances and made great speeches. They created long plans and strategies and companies. They built buildings, then tore them down and built different ones. Still the city did not grow as before. Every idea to close the chasm between the two cities was swallowed by that dark abyss. The elders looked at the ash and clinker people of the Low City, at the brittle and rusted people of the High City and said: “Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will just twist itself into the same tortured forms. We need to get rid of this divide.”

And so the elders shouted down into the abyss between the two cities, “Divide, will you go!” And back from it came a great bellow. It was a bellow of molten fire, punctuated by hammer blows. A great beast hauled itself up, eyes burning, and it began to speak:

“I see a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, building a beautiful city. To have one city again, you must choose to reward all decently for their labour, for all to have a part and a place, and know of each other and of each other’s concerns.”

And the elders and people of the High City and people of the Low City looked up at the great beast. “How?” they asked, “We have tried. How?”

And the beast turned; it turned its head from the people, turned its head out of this page. It is facing you, with those great burning eyes. That smell you can smell, perhaps it’s its molten breath. Those flickers in the corner of your eyes, perhaps sparks rising from it into the air. That sound you can hear, its voice like flame played over metal, saying:

“Some have tried, but not all, not as if this is one city. In all the things that you do: to reward decently each for their labour; to give all a part and a place; to know of each other and each other’s concerns. You would all be happier in such a city, and the chasm would close. Look across this divide, and see your fellows, neither Low City, nor High City, but as equals.”

For a summary of research into Sheffield, inequality, and information on a campaign for greater economic equality in Sheffield, see the Sheffield Equality Group:

sheffieldequalitytrust.org.uk

This story includes a mashup of:

“A Tale of Two Cities” (1859) by Charles Dickens

gutenberg.org/etext/98

“A Tale of Two Cities... A study in Manchester and Sheffield” (1996) by Ian Taylor, Karen Evans, and Penny Fraser

books.google.co.uk/books?id=rdFg3mk09OYC

“A Tale of Two Cities – The Sheffield Project” (2009) by Bethan Thomas, John Pritchard, Dimitris Ballas, Dan Vickers and Danny Dorling
shef.ac.uk/sasi

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- verb -

to wander about or act slowly and without much purpose.

- noun -

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HOUSING CO-OPS.

WHEN IS A HOUSE NOT A SUPERMARKET?

HELEN WARBURTON.

WHEN MY KIDS TELL THEIR FRIENDS THEY LIVE IN A CO-OP, THEY ASSUME WE LIVE IN A SUPERMARKET. BECAUSE THERE AREN'T MANY HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES AROUND, IT'S NOT EASY FOR THEM TO EXPLAIN.

SHORT-LIFE HOUSING.

I first got involved in co-operatives in 1990, when I was living in Brighton, because I was fed up of dodgy landlords who charged high rents and never did the repairs. Watch This Space was a short-life housing co-op, where the members negotiated the temporary rental, at peppercorn rents, of council properties that were in a poor state of repair or due for demolition. Co-op members looked for empty properties and then, if the council owned them, got agreement that we live in them while their plans for development, sale or demolition went through. Of course this is fine, if, in return for low rent, you don't mind living with disrepair for a while and having to move every six months to a year. But I did.

LONGER SHELF-LIFE HOUSING.

I moved to Sheffield where rents were lower, landlords slightly more scrupulous and being unemployed didn't make me a leper. But I still wanted more secure and better-maintained housing, without having to pay mega rent or become a home-owner.

I went to the Co-operative Development Agency to find out more about housing co-ops and discovered two other models. If I had money to invest, but not enough to buy a house on my own (or didn't want to be a sole home-owner), I just needed to find six (now three) other people in the same boat and we could set up a joint ownership housing co-op. With a joint ownership co-op, a group of people invest in buying a property together. In this situation, if a member wants to leave, their share in the property would have to be bought out by the others or by a new member.

The other model was the fully mutual co-op, where a group of people have control over their housing, without actually owning it personally. The group sets up and registers the co-op as an Industrial and Provident Society or IPS (which, in legal terms, like a company, is treated as an individual), who then applies for mortgages, owns the property and to whom the tenants pay rent. However, the tenants are also the directors of the company, so they set the rents, decide what repairs to do, decide who moves in and how it's all run. With this model, no-one needs any money, beyond a £1 share to join and they don't need to get bought out to leave.

GETTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

In 1994, I saw an ad for Brambles Housing Co-op, which is a fully mutual co-op. I was a bit daunted by what, for me, were radical politics, but moved in. Brambles have two adjacent houses, with lovely gardens, in Burngreave. At that time, meals, childcare and incomes were shared, and after a few months I wanted more space to myself. So I moved out and helped to set up a new co-op, also in Burngreave, called Fireside. Brambles is still going strong, with a vibrant mix of activists and parters living there. Both Brambles and Fireside are members of a national network of co-ops called Radical Routes. RR exists to promote equality and co-operation. It supports member co-ops (workers' co-ops and housing ones) to work towards social change. Radical Routes runs a Loanstock scheme, where anyone can ethically invest in co-ops, providing a pool of money for member co-ops to borrow from. Fireside and Brambles also run their own loanstock schemes.

Other types of housing co-ops exist too, such as purpose built ones, self-build ones, and tenant management organisations.

Fireside Housing Co-op is twelve years old now. We have a terrace of four houses with shared gardens. Living here has helped me learn loads of new skills like practical DIY, renovating and repairing the houses, book-keeping, computer skills, meeting and democratic decision-making skills, veg-growing, etc. We are a mixture of single adults, single parents and kids; some working, some studying and some self-employed. Not being tied to a job to keep the roof over our heads has allowed me to risk packing in work to go self-employed, as have other members of the co-op. Each household lives like any shared house, but the shared gardens allow our kids, and the neighbours' kids, a safe place to play together, so we often help each other out with childcare. We collectively decide what rents to set, prioritise repairs and improvements and adapt the houses to meet our changing needs. Over the years we've shared resources like vehicles, power tools, washing machines and computers, so have achieved a good quality of life even on low incomes. We have the privacy of our own spaces, with friends on tap for support and partying if we want it.

My son described being co-operative as like when he and his brother play a computer game and one of them does the direction buttons whilst the other does the shooting so they get to the next level easier. I think that pretty much sums it up.

There are lots of opportunities to get involved – from setting up new co-ops to joining or investing in existing ones.

For more information, check out www.radicalroutes.org.uk, www.avoncda.coop/housingcoops, www.catalystcollective.co.uk, or phone me, Helen, at Fireside Housing Co-op 0114 278 1350.



PAGE 13.

THE THRILL OF THE CHASE.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A RELATIONSHIP AND WANTED OUT?

THOMAS HOLME.

Have you ever been in a relationship and wanted out, to be single again? Hankered for it? Felt like you needed it more than anything else?

"Hell, I miss the thrill of the chase..." he said it to me with an air of authority. The man thought he knew what he wanted, but he didn't. Underneath it all, no-one does. We're all just running on an assortment of whims, hunches, gut feelings, paranoias and an ever-so-subtle feeling of social inadequacy. Yes indeed, we are all in the same boat. Even if some of us cannot admit it, we are. Sailing the ferocious seas of human interaction and foreplay in a huge, sloppily run, badly organised vessel manned by a shabby ramshackle of two-bit-wannabes and simpleton fraudsters.

One of my more senior legal advisor's recently said to me: "There are two types of people in this world, Tom. There are those who know they are fucked up, and there are those who don't. Which camp would you rather be in?"

"Hot Damn" I said,

"I'd rather know and go down with the ship tied to the mast than cower in the lower deck, whimpering to myself that it'll all go away and be fine if I just ignore it for long enough." The world's a really fucked up place - swallow it down in one mighty gulp like the medicine it is and use what's available to you, for all it's worth.

Some say that the thrill of the chase does not exist:

"What, you enjoy a string of rejections and having meaningless sex with people who you aren't in the slightest bit compatible with?"

Well, to be fair, there is something to be said for the latter half of that summary, but more often than not it's a tiring chase and ultimately futile in oh so many ways. The kill is where the action's at, not the chase.

...As the beast lowers its neck to a point, snorts at the ground and silently poises its slender limbs, ready for the pounce and that first bite into fresh flesh and the longed-for thick, metallic tasting red liquid.

Many people try dating online. I'm sure it works for some people. In fact, I know people it has worked for and they have turned out to be very happy. But on the whole, it seems like somewhat of a sausage fest out there on the high tides of t'interweb. The internet is crammed with half wit men desperately seeking the woman of their dreams, hoping that somehow this perfect vision of a woman will magically fall into their lap after a string of exchanging emails and photos of themselves. Get a grip. Now I know it sounds like I'm on my high-horse here, but I'm really not. I speak from experience. I have been one of these men, these sad, lonely men. I must confess, in all honesty, it is a degrading and humiliating experience. It makes you feel like a heap of shit, rotting in the gutter of life with nothing but your own imagination for company. It is also, boring. Very boring.

So what's a guy to do?

I'm looking for someone special, someone who gets me and who wants to enjoy life with me. The real deal, the long haul. But where, when and who? Well, my distinguished readers, these things have a habit of just happening. But you have to put yourself out there, physically, like when you meet that gorgeous little minx on a four and half hour National Express journey or when you're pissed off like never before because something huge has happened, you've gone from hero to zero in the space of a day, you walk into a badly lit bar and meet that really sweet northern lass you've been dreaming of for so long. You won't be expecting it. It just happens.

Ever hankered to be in a relationship? Hankered for it? Felt like you needed it more than anything else?

"Hell, I'd do anything to meet the one..."

Two sides of the same grubby coin you found on the floor outside Pound Stretcher, my friends. Listen up all you lovely people. You'll probably never be completely happy with what you've got. There will always be something that's missing, that thing you hanker after. By the time you've got it, you begin to realise you miss what you had. Life's like that. So: Out to the chase, make the most of what you've got, when you've got it. Nothing lasts forever.

Merry Christmas, One and All.

I Remain,
Festively single & clutching onto the mistletoe with gritted teeth,
Much Love,
Thomas Holme
xxx

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SPLIFF POLITICS.

THE DISMISSAL OF PROF NUTT.

DOUG PYPER.

MY FIRST REACTION TO THE NEWS THAT THE HOME SECRETARY, ALAN JOHNSON, HAD SACKED THE CHAIR OF THE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE MISUSE OF DRUGS, PROFESSOR DAVID NUTT, WAS TO THINK OF GALILEO GALILEI.

When, in 1633, Galileo defended his view that the earth was not at the centre of the universe, the Catholic Church tried him for heresy and subsequently imprisoned him. Time, of course, has seen Galileo vindicated. Similarly, when Professor Nutt stood by the evidence that LSD, cannabis and ecstasy are less harmful than alcohol and tobacco, Alan Johnson accused Prof. Nutt of straying from his brief as a scientific advisor; the consequence was dismissal. Heresy, it seems, comes in various forms.

In Now Then Issue 10, I wrote about the inadequate treatment of scientific evidence by the House of Lords when they considered upgrading cannabis to class B. Though the view of the ACMD and a wealth of experts ran counter to reclassification, the Government's "tough on drugs" approach won out and cannabis was upgraded. Thus it comes as little surprise that Alan Johnson has further undermined the ACMD by sacking Prof. Nutt. The media's response has been generally supportive of Nutt; yet it has been difficult to find an orderly discussion of the issues and a suggestion for a way forward. Hopefully this article can achieve this.

NUTT SACKED.

Was Alan Johnson right to sack Nutt for crossing the line into politics? Johnson stated that - in commenting that alcohol and tobacco cause more harm than LSD, cannabis and ecstasy - Nutt "acted in a way that undermined the Government rather than supporting its work". Yet, is support for the Government when it runs policy against the grain of evidence really something we want from the ACMD?

Prof. Nutt made these comments in a lecture at Kings College in July. Johnson also criticised Nutt's comments that horse-riding is more dangerous than ecstasy; Prof. Nutt made these comments in January, in the Journal of Psychopharmacology. Why wait so long to sack him?

A cynic might suggest Nutt was sacked now because a government on the back foot can't afford too many thorns in its side. Government policy has been diverging from the position of the ACMD for a while. In 2004 the then Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, asked the ACMD to reconsider its opposition to upgrading cannabis to class B: the ACMD reaffirmed its position. Despite this, on 25 November 2008 a bid in the Lords to block the Government's plan to upgrade cannabis failed. At the beginning of 2009 the most recent Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, forced Prof. Nutt to apologise for his horse-riding comments, despite his position being known to the Government before his appointment. Now, at the tail end of 2009, the present Home Secretary has further undermined the ACMD. What we see from this is that sacking Nutt was simply another chapter in the Home Office's battle against the ACMD. For failing to reconsider his views, Prof. Nutt's head has rolled.

So, were Nutt's statements inappropriately political? No doubt they pertain to policy, but, as Nutt pointed out in November's New Scientist, "simple, accurate and understandable statements of scientific fact are precisely what the advisory council is supposed to provide". With this in mind, let us look more closely at the relationship between drugs science and drugs politics.

SCIENCE AND POLICY.

Winston Churchill perhaps most accurately described the position of government scientific advisors as "on tap, but never on top". On tap, a scientist can be highly useful to politicians. Hugh Pennington, Emeritus Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Aberdeen, has pointed out that scientific advice can be valuable to politicians when they want to depoliticise an issue by "invoking science" as a policy justification.

For instance, Ed Miliband recently announced a new fleet of nuclear power stations. Lack of consultation on the matter prompted Caroline Lucas, the leader of the Green Party, to say "bypassing the planning system in this way is bad news for democracy". Miliband was more than happy to invoke science to justify this lack of consultation.

Thus when science accords with policy, recourse is readily taken to it; when otherwise, it appears heads will roll. Prof. Pennington cites extracts from Price's Government and Science (1954) to explain: "any novel idea is an inconsistency that could cause temporary waste and disorder and inefficiency". Thus a scientific advisor advocating facts which find ill fit with policy distracts from the Government's desire to paint its policies as evidence-based; such distractions are not readily tolerated by career politicians.

Yet, as Nutt himself has said, "policies that ignore the realities of the world we live in are doomed to fail". Current policy is failing. Labour policy (and the Tories are likely to be even more prohibitive) holds that the illegality of drugs dissuades use amongst the bulk of society. Yet this argument is not supported by the evidence.

Drug use has grown since the campaign against drugs got going in the 60s. At that time there were around 2,000 registered drug addicts - now there are estimated to be around 360,000 "problem drugs users". Even accounting for inconsistencies in data gathering, the difference is stark. Furthermore, according to a report in September's New Scientist, "it is a pattern that has been repeated the world over".

As the ACMD has repeatedly pointed out, stricter penalties do not lead to a reduction in drugs use. A 2008 World Health Organisation report which examined drugs laws and drug use in 17 different countries could find no correlation between the severity of penalty and the prevalence of use.

Indeed, the opposite seems true: softening drugs laws might reduce harm. Prof. Nutt cites Portugal as an example of this. In 2001, Portugal decriminalised all personal use of drugs; use remained roughly the same, whilst ill health and death rates fell. A report by the Washington think tank the Cato Group states: "judged by virtually every metric, the Portuguese decriminalisation framework has been a resounding success". This is not just a Portuguese phenomenon: as I reported in January, the initial downgrading of cannabis to class C was strongly correlated with a reduction in its use.

Thus, not only is prohibition failing to reduce the harms associated with drug taking, but it is in fact exacerbating those harms. In respect of ecstasy use, an editorial in the Guardian (03/11/2009) sums it up well: "the three-year sentence that a teenager can receive for providing friends with a few ecstasy tablets snuffs out his future far more surely than any drug and does so at great expense to the taxpayer".

WHAT NOW?

The treatment of Prof. Nutt at the hands of the Home Office is surely damaging to the relationship between science and politics in general, and such has been widely reported in the press. The damage that we're concerned with here is that done to the ACMD and to the larger debate on drugs.

At the time of writing, Nutt's sacking has prompted the resignation of two further experts from the ACMD. As Ian Stolerman, Emeritus Professor of Behavioural Pharmacology at King's College London, has said: "After this unjustified dismissal, anyone who takes over from Professor Nutt risks being branded by the scientific community as a collaborator with a Government that has no respect for expertise". The Home Office could well have irreparably damaged the ACMD. However, in my view, there is a silver lining to this.

Prof. Nutt has stated he will set up a new advisory committee if the current ACMD disbands. He has, he states, already been pledged the requisite funds (the ACMD costs £150k pa to run). A truly independent advisory committee with a powerful voice is likely to be hugely beneficial for the debate on drugs. The sacking of Prof. Nutt has proven once and for all that the ACMD are too easily hamstrung at the behest of the Home Office, notwithstanding their statutory footing (Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, s 1). Powerful advocacy of the evidence is needed to combat those more concerned with political expediency than social, economic and scientific fact. Alan Johnson might well have galvanised the resolve of scientists to have their views aired by an effective body of representatives.

If this occurs - hopefully - Nutt will likely wait less time than Galileo to find vindication.

We’re down in Bradford this month promoting a show on 5th December.

Word Life – 5th December, 8pm, £5
Theatre at the Mill
University of Bradford.

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Gareth Durasow

We’ll be back with some more Sheffield shows in the new year. Watch this space.

In the meantime;

Submit any poems (up to 30 lines) and prose (up to 800 words) to subs@nowthensheffield.com.

HOME.

Only there, the afternoons could suddenly pause...
Carol Ann Duffy, ‘Stafford Afternoons’

I try to imagine it differently, coming back to this town,
its streets the same except for shops unemptied,
a book store not bought out by Waterstones,

or the Ancient High House not leaning forwards,
its bulging Elizabethan plaster and timberwork.
But as the train shuttles down the West Coast mainline

and I shift my head to gaze into the gloaming outside –
a paperback of Zoom! on the table to pass the time;
the girl opposite eyeing it with suspicion or interest –

I’m woken by the town’s lit-up landmark; that castle
built from wood, then stone, then again and again
until it was left in the ruins that remain and its stock

of earthworks. The station’s empty in pools of orange
light. This, I think to myself, won’t be the last time
I wander bleary-eyed past the silence of the Bird in Hand,

a bunch of kids skittering their BMXs round McDonalds
or the small miracle of a bargain shop where, for years,
everything’s been ‘Going Going Going’

though, for a second there, I almost considered turning off
to Joxer Brady’s, even The Coach, but every time I just
drag my heels past, onto the waiting shadow of the night bus.

BEN WILKINSON.

First published in Poetry London (No.61, Autumn 2008)

BEST.

Beneath the feet are people
who had everything
ripped from them like flesh from bone,
torn from the soft, pink satin
of comfortable suburbia.

Beneath the feet that walk in pairs
are feet that wander and wait
to be found.
Immersed in a subterranean world
where silence gathers like gnats,
swarming in the shadows of glowing dusk,
scorching the skin with itching epitaphs and red souvenirs.

Away from chintz and warm fires,
a world of coffee and laughter,
are those who listen to the echoes
and draw sketches from the reflections.

Hazy sunrises mean only dawn,
a beacon of trivial insignificance
in an infinitesimal world,
and speak nothing of unity
or a hand to hold.

Hiding involuntarily in shadows,
invisible to the world
are people looking upwards
from beneath the feet of us all.

VIKKI LITTLEMORE.

LAST WILL AND T.

And to you my high horse, I leave
this original saddle, the stirrups thrown in
for luck, as well as the rest of the tack.
And after you have galloped off, I leave
the echo of your hooves to the heather
and what’s left of the morning air
to the ducks in the water-lilied lake.

And I leave the ring of my doorbell
to the empty room, to the stained carpet
where Charley knocked over the soup
when he got drunk on emptiness
until he was full of light. To the rest
I leave the benefit of the doubt.
Now and at the hour of my death.

MICHAEL MCCARTHY.

Taken from ‘At the Races’ (Smith/Doorstop, 2009) – overall
winner of the 2008 Book & Pamphlet Competition.

BNP WIVES.

RACISM AND BAD POETRY.

JAMES POWELL BRETT.

FILMED IN A PART OF HAMPSHIRE TWINNED WITH THE
CONCEPT OF DESPAIR, BNP WIVES IS YET ANOTHER MAWKISH
SKY DOCUMENTARY DESIGNED WITH A TITLE THAT SUCKERS
YOU IN FROM THE EPG GUIDE IN MUCH THE SAME WAY THAT
A FATAL CAR CRASH RUBBERNECKS IN PASSING DRIVERS.
NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT'S A MUST WATCH. OF COURSE IT'S EASY
TO BE ALL LIBERAL AND POKE FUN AT THEM ALL; IT'S ONLY
UNDER THIS PROVISIO THAT I CONTINUE.

Filled with people whose dental hygiene alone suggests that a website spin-off with the same name would appeal only to the most depraved of internet fetishists, BNP Wives sets about documenting the wives and single women who love nothing more than a good dollop of racism on their chips. The programme focuses on Margaret, seemingly a cross between Cilla Black, Paul Daniels and a cornflake, and Lynn, a haughty upper class housewife who presumably hates foreign people as much as cup stains on antique furniture. Both the women take an active role in the party and spend their days in a haze of self importance and arbitrary hate.

One particularly hilarious scene sees Margaret drive around the local estate powered only by a nostalgia for the 1950s, megaphone in hand, shouting out BNP slogans whilst the theme from *The Great Escape* plays. The women then decide to go stick it to the system by selling their right-wing paper outside a mosque. Inevitably, some people come and engage them in debate, so much so that the scene resembles a Marjory Dawes coffee morning.

What's good to see is that the production team have clearly decided to have a bit of a laugh in the editing, including scenes that show the campaigners constantly voicing their concerns about how they are being perceived and blaming the presence of a camera on the poor turnout they receive. They missed a trick by not employing a Sopranos level of production and a Mogwai soundtrack to inject it with some sort of tragic beauty. In fact, it's a wonder the image-obsessed BNP would allow such a programme to be made, given how it paints all its supporters as mobile arguments for eugenics whose eyebrows suggest that at some time in their past Virgil Tracy entered their gene pool. They also dedicate time to showing quite how ill researched and unfounded their beliefs are, painting targets on their heads for all the Stewart Lee types out there.

Eventually we get to a local BNP festival and old Dr. Robotnik Griffin turns up, as determined to stop immigration as he is to stop Sonic getting through green hill zone act one. Margaret, clearly in her element, sees this as a public stage for some of the poetry she's written. Adding to the incongruity of poetry and right-wing politics, the poems aren't even about racism and concern her adulterous husband: "When things go wrong and I'm all alone / That's the time I'll break down and cry / Though you're just an adulterous tosser now / You were once one hell of a guy." If any other insight into her mindset was needed she later added: "I spend my whole day being angry!"

Watching the programme, it quickly becomes apparent that the women featured are all living irreparably broken lives, full of personal tragedy, infidelity and bereavement. How better to fill the joy-shaped hole in their hearts than with an arbitrary hate for people with too much melanin? Rather than try and find affection from their fellow humans, both women have plumped for the unchallenging, unquestioning love of animals. Lynn is in fact a self-termed "cat-aholic" and has filled her house with cats, effigies of cats and pictures of cats. There are so many models and drawings of pumas in particular that it's tempting to think that all this racism nonsense covers a deeper subconscious desire for some of the dark meat. It seems, when it comes down to it, the main motivating force in these people's lives isn't a campaign to get rid of foreigners; it's about bolstering self-worth. After all, what better way to try and forget your horribly failed life than to attach to yourself the achievements and history of an entire nation. These people have a drowning grip on the notion of being "British".

All in all then, The BNP shows that it is in fact its own worst enemy.

Acting, as the party does, as a huge cunt magnet, it's no wonder the more people get to see of the members the less they like them. That's not to take away the human element - some of the people in the programme have only turned to the party after personal tragedy - but given their abhorrent and naïve views it's clearly fine for us all to point and laugh at them!



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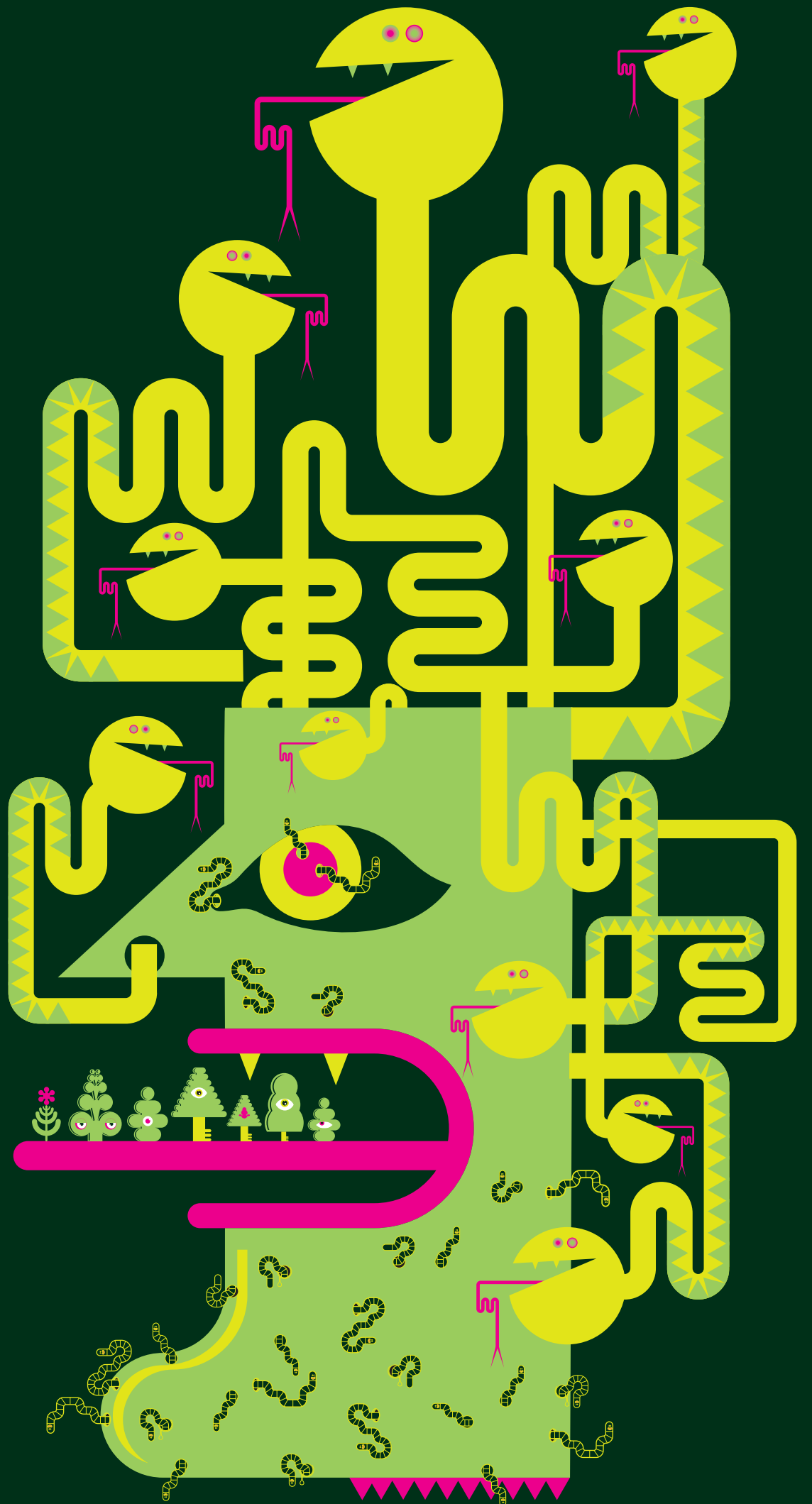
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MICK MARSTON.

WHO SAID THAT DESIGN COULDN'T HAVE SUBTEXT?

INTERVIEW BY MATT JONES.

A PROPER YORKSHIRE MAKER THIS MONTH. MICK MARSTON IS AN ARTIST WHOSE WORK HAS HAUNTED SHEFFIELD FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER.

With a list of professional clients longer than my arm (my knuckles drag on the floor) along the likes of the New York Times, Nickelodeon and Nintendo, we are incredibly lucky to have his work decorating our humble magazine.

The Futile Vignette name for his work comes from clients becoming scared of challenging and appropriate imagery and asking for something tamer and more accessible, resulting in a growing stock of images that needed a home - finding one in 2003 and steadily growing since.

In a world of bland commercial illustration Mick's work strikes a chord with me, subtle invective hidden in simple 'cute' shapes where the underlying message has teeth. Great stuff.

BASICS, PLEASE - WHAT STARTED YOU DRAWING?

I've drawn since I can remember. Cowboys were a speciality - start from the hat & work down. Apparently I was a precocious brat. I knew how to mix turquoise at three years old.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PROCESS OF STARTING A NEW PIECE?

Well, these days it's usually a commission. Sometimes it's like being forced to draw at gunpoint, sometimes it's a breeze. The world of commercial illustration is not as cool or as romantic as it seems.

If I'm doing an exhibition or something just for the hell of it, I have a stockpile of ideas and drawings in sketchbooks to call upon. My main focus when making a new piece is the search for a 'good shape'.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

I use my eyes and ears a lot.

TOOLS - WHAT DO YOU USE REGULARLY AND WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE?

FreeHand on a Mac. I still can't understand why Adobe Illustrator won the battle of the vector software. Favourite tool is pencil (or pen) and paper. Printmaking is my special skill, especially screen printing and linocuts.

WHAT OTHER ARTISTIC MEDIA HAVE HAD AN EFFECT ON YOUR ART?

I've always been a fan of animation, specifically Tex Avery, Chuck Jones and the UPA stuff from 50s America.

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR DAYS?

I work as a part time lecturer at Leeds Met, so Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays are spent sitting in traffic jams and trying to inspire large groups of the uninspired. Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays are spent doodling, dog walking, cooking, reading, stretching, running, jumping, bathing, dressing up, dancing, standing still and worrying. I waste a hell of a lot of time. I like sleeping.

OUT OF YOUR RECENT WORK, WHICH PIECE HAVE YOU ENJOYED MAKING THE MOST?

I recently did a commission for The Times Education supplement. The article was about kids that don't like physical education. I drew an angry fat boy made from sports equipment - a rugby ball for a head, basket ball and football eyes, a training cone for a nose, an upturned hockey stick for a mouth, a table tennis bat for an ear and his body was made from football pitch markings (centre circle etc). They loved it.

HOW HAS YOUR ART EVOLVED OVER TIME?

I've stripped it back. This was in direct response to all that maximalist, vaguely aspirational, rainbows, butterflies and humming birds illustration that proliferated a few years back. I thought it was the visual representation of 'grabbing' a skinny latte in Starbucks, with the collar of your Abercrombie and Fitch rugby shirt turned up, texting 'smilies' with Coldplay on in the background - illustrations done by young blokes that wear t-shirts with arbitrary slogans on them and scarves with big knots. Don't want any of that, thank you.

I try to cut out anything arbitrary, it needs to have a reason to be there otherwise it gets deleted.

HOW HAS ART IN GENERAL CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED?

Technology has speeded things up but the downside of this is that clients expect things yesterday and quality suffers. Most of my better stuff has a gestation period where it's thought about, added to or refined over a period of time. Ridiculously short deadlines don't allow this to happen.

Craft skills are disappearing. It's quite sad to be honest.

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

Working on an editorial piece about the best place to live in the UK if you own a horse (it's true) and an idea for a book based on all the spam I get on my email account. Alfonso Alvarado (where do they get these names from?) sent "A bigger stick would put bigger smile on your wife face", and Alexandria Gilliam kindly informed me that "By enlarging your instrument you will manage to keep up your good name".

ANY TIPS ON HOW TO SURVIVE MAKING MONEY FROM ART? DO YOU FIND IT IMPORTANT?

Don't follow the herd, don't do pale imitations of what is already out there. You have to be very motivated, thick skinned, flexible, amiable, able to multi task, understand your market and you will probably need another job alongside. Oh, and you have to be good at it.

It's my job (well, one of them anyway), so I guess it is important. I have dogs to feed and a wife to keep in finery.

WHAT DO YOU DISLIKE IN ART?

Stuff with no ideas. Form over content.

WHAT MAKES YOU SMILE IN ART?

Stuff with ideas, form and content in perfect harmony.

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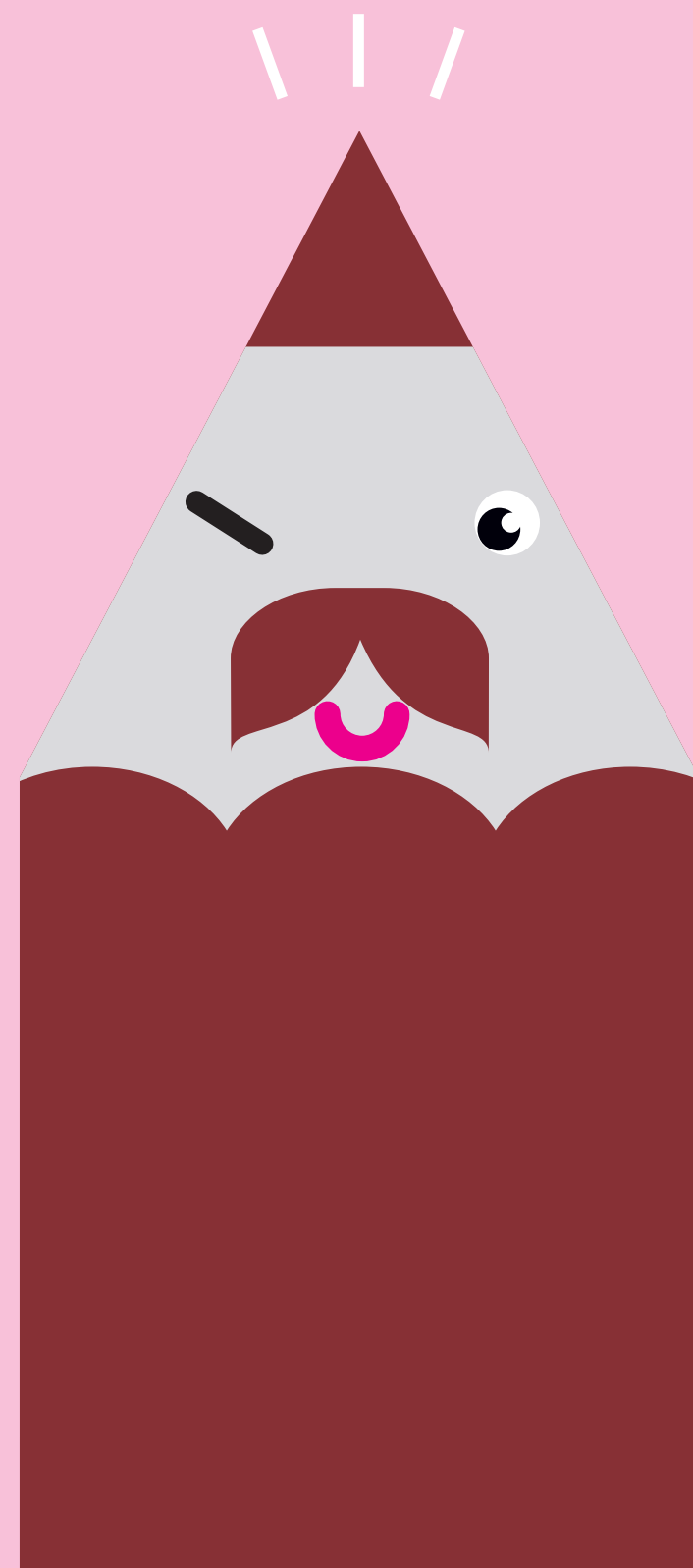
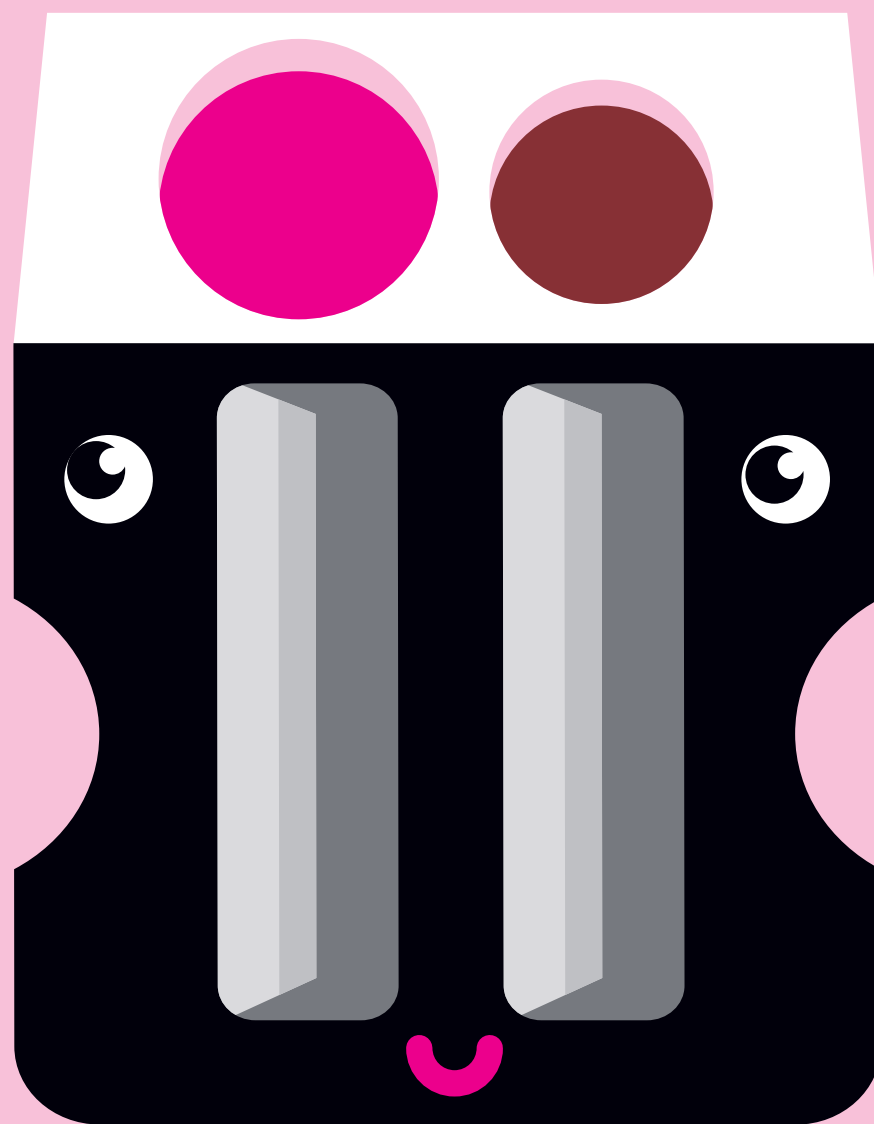


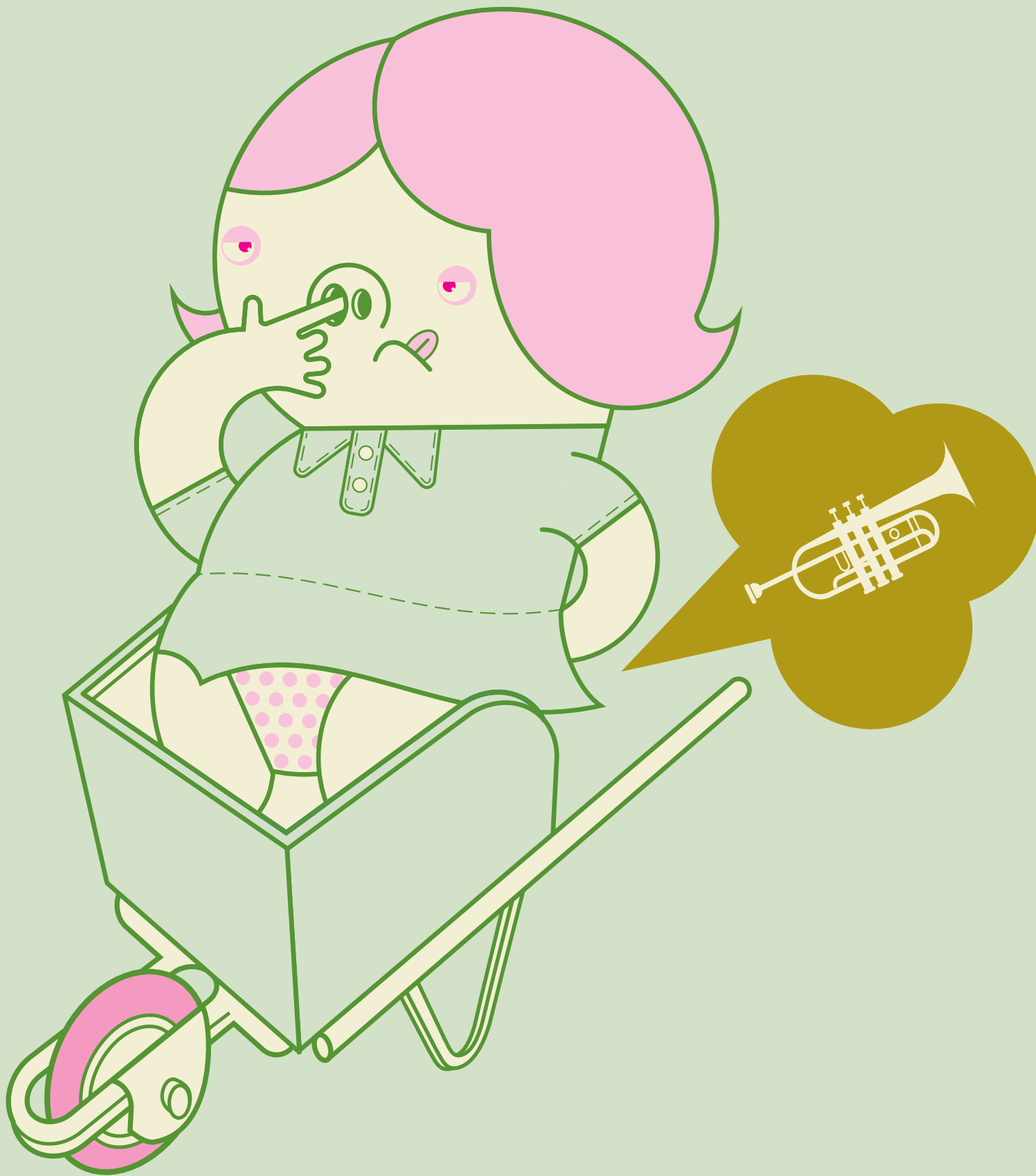
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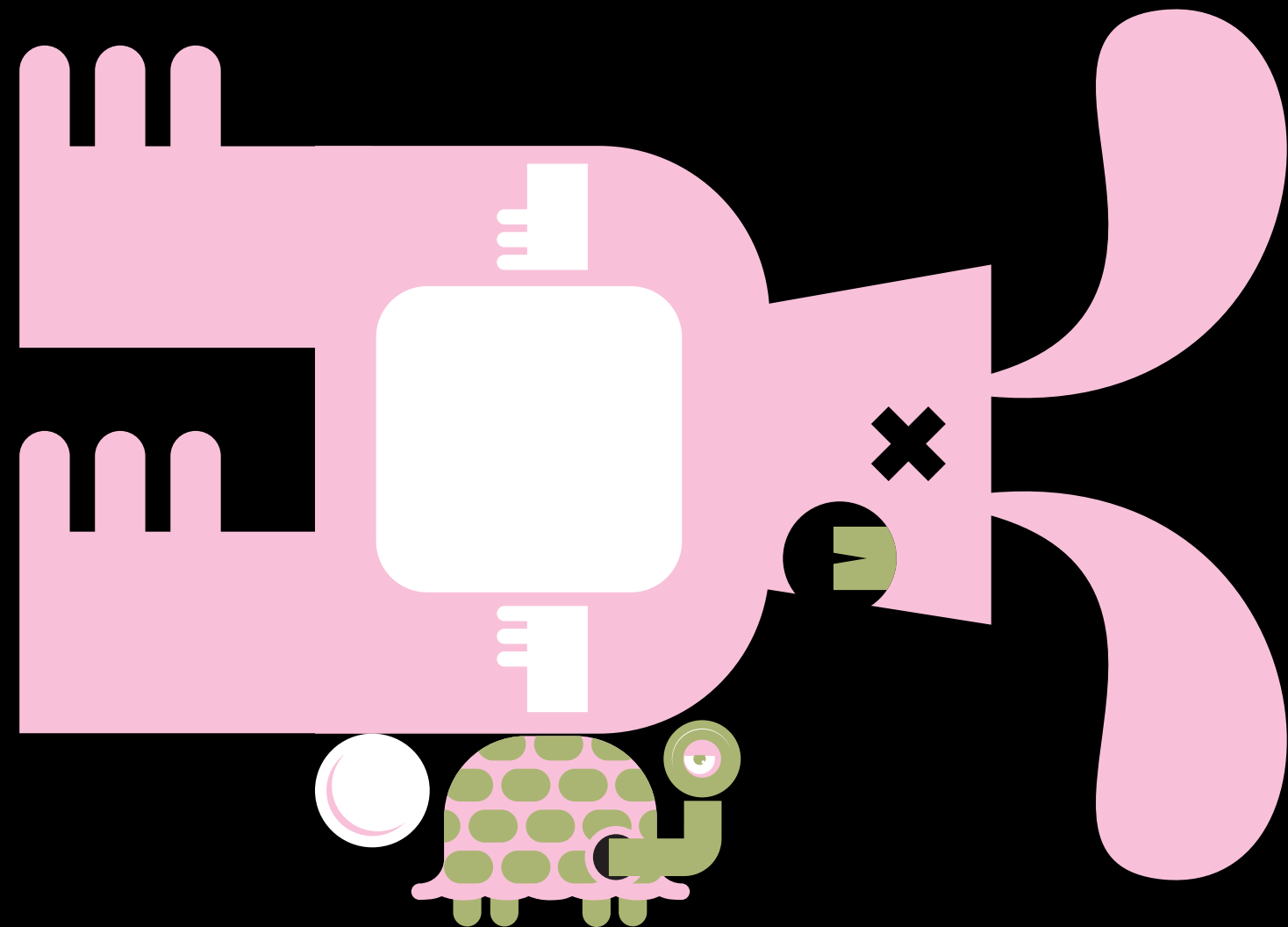
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BREAKCORE.

ELECTRONICA'S WICKED COUSIN.

SEAN ADAMS.

breakcore /brāk-kōr / n The combination of industrial, electronic and jungle samples with heavily modified and effected breakbeats at a range of speeds, resulting in dark, fast and aggressive electronic music. Often combined with an element of humour and unexpected use of sampling.

Once reserved for dingy, darkened clubs in Benelux countries, breakcore is rapidly moving into the mainstream electronic arena. Every year, increasing amounts of people flock to festivals like Glade, Bang Face and Bloc to wallow in the rapid modified breaks and industrial synths that typify the genre. Since its humble origins in Germany in the early nineties as a reaction to jungle and rave music in England, our lifetimes have seen the genre go from strength to strength.

Let me set the record straight. Breakcore isn't "just noise", as many have told me; it's music. And like all music, there is good and bad within the genre. What is crucial about it, though, is that there really aren't any rules. Most breakcore records are treasure troves of ambient, experimental pieces. The genre as a whole is really unafraid to test what is not only possible but what is acceptable within music, and that is really a breath of fresh air on the musical landscape. Aren't we all a bit fed up of listening to the same canned sound again and again? Wouldn't it be pleasant to buy a record and not know what to expect?

Breakcore's recent rise in popularity isn't hard to explain: artists like Aphex twin, Luke Vibert and Squarepusher have long been household names and now electronica's wicked cousin is becoming more and more acceptable, on the tip of every scenester's tongue from the Devonshire quarter to Shoreditch. Major breakcore labels have started to cash in on newer emerging styles such as dubstep and future hip hop. Planet Mu now hosts dubstep artists such as iTAL tEK who have inevitably brought fans' attention to other artists on their roster. Netlabels have also had their part to play - often home to the weird and wonderful, breakcore has always found a home within their experimental realms. Now, more and more people are listening to what they have to say.

Breakcore has been around for a long time and has enjoyed a dedicated following since its emergence in the early nineties, but it has never been up there with its sister genres: drum and bass, jungle and techno. Perhaps this is because it remains a bit of an acquired taste, or perhaps it's due to many artists' unwillingness to cash in on their exploits. Venetian Snares famously denies the existence of the term breakcore, while Dormouse mockingly defines himself as a rhythm and blues artist (he isn't). Nobody involved in breakcore seems to care if people like it or not. They just enjoy themselves and that is something that I can't help respect - a genre that is unconcerned with its identity, a far cry from New Era caps and and pointy shoes. At last!

For a crash course in the genre I urgently recommend you listen to the following releases:

Venetian Snares - Rossz Csillag Alatt Született.

An undisputed classic. Brilliant use of classical music and amen break manipulation.

AZ-Rotator - Science of Chance.

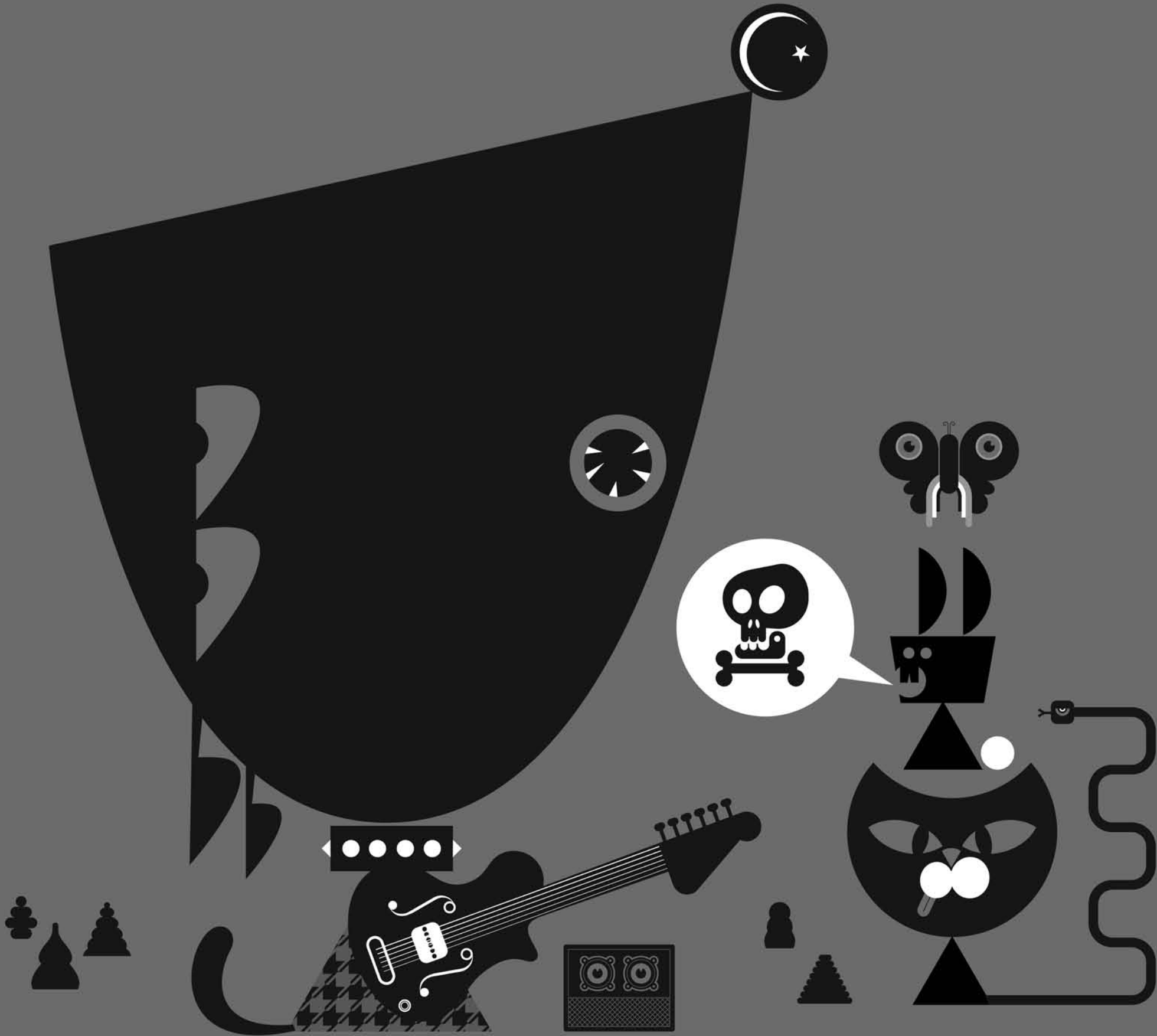
Slower than a lot of breakcore but no less mad. Very intricate and very, very good.

Shitmat - Killababyloncuts.

A hilarious compilation of tunes all made from the same ragga sample. Possibly a reference to producers' oversampling of reggae and ragga vocals or just the equivalent of a musical raspberry.

Baxter Lilly - Unsichtbare Flecken.

Somewhere between Kraut rock, electronica and Dimmu Borgir.



THE FIELD.

16TH NOVEMBER.

BUNGALOWS&BEARS.
REVIEWER - IMOGEN DECORDOVA.

SOMETIMES IT'S NECESSARY FOR ELECTRONIC MUSIC TO PROVIDE SOME WARMTH AND DEPTH. SOMETIMES IT'S OK TO COMBINE A HYBRID MIX OF LUDDITE AND TECHNOPHILIC SENSIBILITIES. MAN MAKETH THE MACHINE - THE MACHINE DO NOT MAKETH THE MAN. SOMETIMES TECHNO CAN DO WITH A GOD DAMN HEARTBEAT. ENTER THE FIELD, TO PROVIDE THE CIRCULATORY ELECTRONIC SYSTEM NEEDED TO PUMP SOME BLOOD THROUGH THE WIRED VEINS OF OF THE BUNGALOWS AND BEARS SOUND SYSTEM .

Joining Sheffield's Pygmie Globetrotters and Forest Creature for an extraordinary rare free gig, (yurp that is correct, FREE) the Kompact-signed Swede, also known as Axel Willner, is accompanied by live guitar, bass and drums. Together they look more like a warped metal band, all tattooed up with a wife beater vest thrown in for good measure, but the sound produced is far removed from what their attire might suggest. Delicate, danceable rhythms that pull in a large hipster crowd and most importantly get them moving. The sort of beats that are repetitive but not tediously monotonous, the sort of driving beats that make you want to dance until your feet bleed. Motorik beats that give a mechanical nod to Can and Neu!

80s power ballad 'Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime' by the Korgis is translated into a dreamy, whimsical mantra, gently aided by light tribal drumming. As much as some are transfixed by the beat, others are most probably lost in the cyclical luscious soundscapes the Field is clearly renowned for.

Watching from the side of the stage to admire the drumming, the live instrumentation really elevates the spectacle. It's no longer Vladislav Delay (whose performance at East London-based Concrete and Glass last year failed to thrill visually) hunched over a laptop with an icy stare transfixed by a blank screen. What kind of a human being can pretend to be enthralled by that?

It's often hard to catch any of the onstage antics. Every so often the tip of a shiny bald head bobs up above the crowd at the front, but maybe sometimes a shiny bald head is all you need to see.

Who said you can't get something for nothing?

BASSWEIGHT CARNIVAL

31ST OCTOBER.

YELLOW ARCH STUDIOS, NEEPSSEND.
REVIEWER - BEN DOREY.

THE RETURN OF BASSWEIGHT CARNIVAL SOLD OUT DAYS IN ADVANCE. THIS WAS PROBABLY IN PART DOWN TO THE SPARCITY OF NIGHTS PUT ON IN 'UNDERGROUND' VENUES- RESULTING IN A GLUT OF YOUNG 'UNS WHO LIKE TO PRETEND THEY'RE IN SKINS - BUT THE MAJORITY OF THE CROWD WERE THERE ON THE BACK OF THE LAST EVENT'S REPUTATION.

Those who wanted brash dubstep were most likely disappointed, but the rest of us were treated to the strongest line up yet. The Sequoia room was a far more subtle and atmospheric affair this time around, with the resident selectors warming up gently with some roots and dub. The minimal dread of Arie A's digi-dub and dubstep riddims were a particular highlight and an appropriate prelude to a strong set by headliner Oris Jay. His brooding and deep dubstep was perfectly complemented by warm grumbles from the massive soundsystem in the corner, and he moved gradually through various dubstep styles in a manner more similar to a techno DJ than the obvious jump-up style adopted by many other top producers in the genre. A nourishing night of music from the Sequoia boys.

However, what was noticeably different about Bassweight Carnival this time round was the popularity of the dub room hosted by Sama Roots. Previously it has played second fiddle to Sequoia's room but this time it was constantly packed for a soundclash between the hosts and Brixton's RDK. The guests played dub across a variety of styles, hyping the crowd with a huge rack, one deck and an earsplitting tin pan sound in a way that wouldn't have been out of place at a warehouse in 1980s London. Each time they took to the controls the room and volume gradually rose in intensity until both crowd and sound were rattling and threatening to fall apart. Thankfully Sama Roots provided the perfect foil, their more steady sound and soulful, contemplative selection healing battered bodies and ears just enough for another onslaught from the RDK. A fantastic soundclash that ranked amongst the best of the past few years in Sheffield.

The only complaint anyone could level at this night is that they've set the bar too high for anything following. Oh, and maybe that those neon children might find another more 'underground' venue to play in and stop shouting over amazing music to chat with me about how good Benga's latest release is...

WATCH THIS FIRE SPREAD.

29TH OCTOBER.

THE SHAKESPEARE, GIBRALTAR ST.
REVIEWER - SARAH MORREY.

IN CELEBRATION OF THE RELEASE OF WATCH THIS FIRE SPREAD'S ALBUM 'DUMB DAYS, DARK NIGHTS' WE GATHER IN THE GOOD OLD SHAKESPEARE, ANTICIPATING THE EVENING'S LINE UP OF SHEFFIELD FAVOURITES. WITH THE FUTURE OF THIS VENUE LYING IN THE HANDS OF UNCERTAINTY, I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL LUCKY TO STILL BE ENJOYING GIGS HERE. IT'S A GREAT SETTING FOR LIVE MUSIC.

First up are Kill The Captains. A stunningly tight performance from a band who have developed over the past couple of years to the point where they begin the first tune and people turn to one another declaring: "This is fucking good!" Intricate melodies layer up to create an achingly beautiful yet powerful sound, woven through some ridiculously elaborate musical conversations between the bass and guitar riffs. At times the vocals don't blend entirely, but if you like your music energetic then this will be right up your street. Currently recording and not to be missed.

Renegade Brass Band leave everyone with an all-encompassing feeling that is summed up in two words: Party Time. These boys are fairly new to the music scene of Sheffield but they are moving forwards quicker than you can shout "more brass!" They play music that is, without a doubt, for having a good old boogie. Taking inspiration from Hot 8 Brass Band and Hypnotic Brass Ensemble, they play some stomping covers, doing particular justice to Young Blood's arrangement of 'Pastime Paradise'. Though at times seeming nervous and unsure of their stage presence, these gentlemen have nothing to worry about. They are accomplished musicians and extremely talented.

Watch this Fire Spread take to the stage and deliver an impressive set of tunes which demonstrate their capabilities as highly professional musicians. A powerful use of dynamics creates effective space and moments of texture sounding so full and dramatic that all we are missing is a stage of performers acting out the stories conveyed in their songs. Unfortunately, the lyrics aren't quite to my liking, sometimes seeming the obvious choice. Lyrics aside, particularly worth of mention is their excellent tango-tune 'Misery and Wine', reminiscent of Beirut but with a more theatrical edge. Louis Romégoux also delivers a stunning performance in his solo tune 'Time', holding listeners rapt with his hauntingly emotionally vocals and magnificent delivery technique.

Their soon to be released single 'In Her Head' made a perfect finish to the set. The choice of harmonies is spot on, and gives a fitting balance between the two vocalists. If you like your music on the pop side then you will love this. A top notch finish to a top notch night.

BLACK SUN EMPIRE.

21ST NOVEMBER.

CORPORATION, MILTON ST.
REVIEWER - FLUENCY.

THOSE WHO DECIDED UPON CORPORATION AS THEIR WEEK'S FINAL DESTINATION WERE DELIVERED A TECHY TWIST AND AN AMOUNT OF BASS-INDUCED ROOM SHAKE THAT EVERY D&B NIGHT SHOULD HAVE, COURTESY OF THE <20HZ SYSTEM AT FEEDBACK, SHEFFIELD'S DARKER ALTERNATIVE TO DANCE MUSIC.

As the midnight bells chimed across the country, SpectraSoul, fresh off new releases on Goldie's imprint Metalheadz, took to the decks, consistently bringing smooth beat transitions and deep, dirty basslines that fitted the smoky, potent atmosphere perfectly. Their DJing skills are revered across the scene almost as much as their production; the balance between mythical, musical vibes and filthy low frequencies coming through the dry ice was sharper than a Samurai blade.

MC E-II showed why he is such a good host, smoothly slicing in with the occasional 16 bars of vocal presence and making sure the crowd were hyped all night.

Black Sun Empire's name comes from the Star Wars novel Shadows of the Empire, and from the off the middle of the dance floor was devastated by darkstep beats that could've taken out the Death Star. With three labels - oBSEssions, BSE Recordings and Shadows of the Empire - the crowd were ensured plenty of dubplates from across the kingdom. From hard techno build-ups to atmospheric pianos, the outfit from Utrecht showed that eight years after bursting on to the scene their sets are still among the most diverse, hard-hitting and purely upfront to be witnessed.

Each drop brought the crowd to an almost frenzied, bouncy rave and by the end of the set Black Sun's empire had definitely increased in numbers. As they say on their Myspace page, "Once you've basked in the glory of the Black Sun, you won't look back."



REVIEWS.

DANIEL JOHNSTON. NEUVA CUMBIA.

ARIE. BEN FROST.

DANIEL JOHNSTON. IS AND ALWAYS WAS.



FERALTONE.

REVIEWER - BEN DOREY.

DANIEL JOHNSTON HAS HAD A CULT FOLLOWING SINCE THE 1980S, BUT JEFF FEUERZEIG'S 2005 DOCUMENTARY 'THE DEVIL AND DANIEL JOHNSTON' SENT HIS POPULARITY SKYROCKETING.

The documentary was tastefully made but drew most focus onto Johnston's early work, especially the haunting lo-fi recordings of *Hi, How Are You* and *Yip Jump Music*. Whilst these adolescent recordings are staggeringly original, they seem to have developed a kitsch appeal in certain circles, and Johnston has been sculpted into another clichéd, mad and misunderstood artist in the minds of many.

However, inconveniently for those creating the legends, Johnston is alive and still creating music. In fact, the raised awareness he has experienced enabled more professional studio work and opened avenues that allowed him to record compositions he previously only held in his head. Most notably there are the strongest echoes so far in Johnston's work of his own heroes - The Beatles.

The first track, 'Mind Movies', acts like a bridge between Johnston's early work and his new, more rounded sound. It begins with an elementary two chord guitar line and Johnston's unique and unnervingly honest voice, before the other elements of the band are tastefully layered in. The lyrics are about an unrequited love, a theme which Johnston excels at expressing. He writes with an almost childlike simplicity, one so open he avoids overstepping the mark into shmultz, and which makes the darker side of his observations all the more pertinent: "I never thought you existed till you cried/ But you just can't prove a thing because you lie."

Other strong tracks on the album tend to draw on similar sets of emotions to the opener. 'Tears' is especially poignant, beginning as a simple tale of lost love but revealing the darker and more uncanny emotions of the mentally ill as you listen closer. The loneliness of living with affected perceptions is perfectly encapsulated with the lines, "All the time was sad/ All the lights were bright" juxtaposed with a psychedelic but twee Sergeant Pepper-style backing.

Many of the songs on this record are almost too strange to listen to. It is hard to stomach the cheesy blues of second track 'Fake Records of Rock and Roll', and even if you can it's difficult to work out exactly what point Johnston is making. Old song 'I Had Lost My Mind' is even stranger, with the addition of wailing guitars and sci-fi synth textures to lyrics describing his brain as "a cute little bugger a bit warped from the rain."

However, if these are just examples of Johnston doing exactly what he wants then they are worth including simply because their childlike originality and honesty are a facet of what makes other tracks so powerful, weird and wonderful. A record you'll just have to listen to for yourselves.

NUEVA CUMBIA. SONIDO MARTINES PRESENTS: NUEVA CUMBIA ARGENTINA...



SOOT.

REVIEWER - ALEX TURNER.

THIS FINE COMPILATION HAS BEEN OUT A FEW WEEKS NOW COURTESY OF DJ/RUPTURE'S SOOT LABEL, BUT AS THE NORTHERN ENGLISH WINTER BITES DOWN, IT'S TROPICAL DANCEFLOOR CHARMS HAVE ONLY BEEN GROWING MORE ALLURING.

Global dance music has been much in vogue on European floors ever since Diplo's *Favela On Blast* mixtape travelogues sent Brazil's frenetic, booty-quaking baile funk sound worldwide, finding instant appreciation in the ears of fans of Miami Bass, Baltimore Club, ghettotech and other kindred sample-heavy genres. In the intervening four years, cross-pollination between South American and more Eurocentric dance styles has produced a steady stream of ice-fresh party movers, notably on Berlin's infamous Man Recordings imprint.

As the album title suggests, the focus here is on artists taking the centuries-old beat of cumbia and bending it into forward-thinking shapes. Characterised by a languid four-four shuffle, cumbia has long existed across South America, drawing influences from African, Native American and Spanish musical traditions along the way and mutating into regional variants. The raw Argentinian Cumbia Villera strand has traditionally had a heavier focus on the use of synths and other electronics, along with an emerging hip-hop / reggaeton flavour. Last year, key Buenos Aires label ZZK attempted to draw a further line in the sand by christening its sound "digital cumbia".

Devotees of the Man Recordings back-catalogue are likely to find readily recognisable names here, in particular the Frikstailers, whose 'Baile Frik' made massive waves across the blogosphere earlier this year with its razor-sharp hybrid patterns. Here they weigh in with two strong cuts, their own 'Cumbia Frikeria' and a remix of Fauna's 'Piratas del Zanjón'. The first of these takes an itchy bongo line, layering on accordion snatches, vocal cut-ups and static to build an intoxicating sense of slow-mo chaos. On the Fauna remix they underpin the track's guttural rapping with wallshaking beats and deep dub-tech chords, strapping these to a shifting, intensely dirty low end to creating a stone-cold dancefloor slayer.

ZZK dons Fauna's second offering, 'Zombie', is another highlight, pulsing and swaggering over six minutes with the kind of fluorescent synthlines currently reinvigorating the UK dubstep scene. Elsewhere, the opening *El Hijo de la Cumbia* remix of Alika y Nueva Alianza's 'Para Bailar' pits pan-pipes and oboes against a rough dancehall vibe, while Chancha Via Circuito's 'Cumbia Malembe' features a lushly narcotic backdrop and wonderfully OTT male vocal, with electric hums and crowing cockerels randomly veering into the mix from time to time.

Interspersed with such leftfield gems are a handful of slightly more straight-laced numbers, but for the most part the tracks here radiate a restlessly inventive attitude that rewards repeated listening, whether in the club or on the headphones. In short, this is fabulous music that you need in your life.

ARIE. DUB.



R8/COLD UP NORF.

REVIEWER - LAMBERTUS PRENT.

ARIE OPERATES IN SHEFFIELD UNDER THE COLD UP NORF AND SEQUOIA BANNERS, SPECIALISING IN DEEP REGGAE AND DUBWISE DUBSTEP WITH A SOULFUL EDGE. ANYONE WHO SAW THIS MAN AT YELLOW ARCH STUDIOS IN OCTOBER WILL KNOW HE DOESN'T MESS ABOUT.

Two years in the making, *Dub* is a good showcase for the many sounds of Arie. The bass production is probably the most striking aspect, reaching the low end effortlessly and teasing out just the right frequencies to make a big system rattle and shake.

Dub opens with 'Daughter of Eve' featuring the vocal talents of Thabo, delivered over a lilting guitar line and atmospheric swirling. 'Mary Jane' throws garage influences into the mix, featuring a distant, soaring pad, manipulated female vocals and a bleepy synth line. Again, the soft sub bass provides the real hook and drives the track along nicely. Likewise, 'August' merges Burial-esque roaring noises and garage vibes with a dub flavour.

'March to the Order' is well complemented by the voice of Jemima Canegrati, who makes the track one of the most instantly identifiable on the album and probably its strongest. She navigates lyrical clichés well, only stumbling once with a 'hands in the air' / 'you don't care' rhyme. The repeating, delayed acoustic guitar sample is satisfying simple, leaving the rest of the tune cavernous and echo-laden.

The more LFO-driven side of dubstep is represented here too. 'Espionage' is as heavy as the album gets, using pitched cymbals and shakers with a detuned LFO bass while the sub goes crazy. On the same tip, 'Dubspace' gets deep and dirty like the best of them.

Occasionally the beats feel slightly cold and one dimensional, perhaps in need of the variety offered by a wider range of samples. Middle frequencies are sometimes neglected in favour of deep sub bass and, while this is perfect for a large soundsystem, it can leave the home user a bit neglected. Turn up loud enough, though, and this album comes alive.

Overall, *Dub* has a coherent feel to it and on the whole is successful in merging a number of different styles. Arie might not have the same hard-hitting sound as fellow R8 artists Rogue State and Squire of Gothos, but this album is a good start and something a bit different for the label.

Dub will be available digitally from R8 Records and on CD from Cold Up Norf Records soon.

BEN FROST. BY THE THROAT.



BEDROOM COMMUNITY.

REVIEWER - MATT JONES.

WRITING A REVIEW ABOUT AN ARTIST LIKE BEN FROST IS A NIGHTMARE. GENRES - RAPIDLY BECOMING MEANINGLESS WITH A LOT OF NEW MUSIC - DO NOT APPLY HERE. HIS FIRST ALBUM, *THEORY OF MACHINES*, WAS RECEIVED WELL ACROSS THE BOARD FROM A DIZZYING VARIETY OF SOURCES, SURPRISING FOR SUCH AN ABSTRACT MUSICIAN WITH SUCH CHALLENGING CONTENT.

The violent birth of electronica has left its taint everywhere, and the artists that follow in its wake are far ranging and diverse. The afterbirth is championed by people like this gent here. This release won't get played in clubs, but I imagine more than a mix or two will start or tail off into a choice track taken from it.

On first listen, a wave of hissing static slowly builds, subtly, and you expect the bleepy, tame sound of Grand Designs backing muzak to follow. It doesn't. A wall of controlled bass cuts through all the shit and tells you exactly what to expect. This is well made, intense electronic music that demands attention.

Electronica does not have to be cold, hard and clinical. In a world where anyone with a laptop can now start making music, the intention and skill of the producer comes in picking samples, recording live instrumentation, taking microphones out into the real world and recording unique noise to build a sonic environment that is purely their own.

Somewhere along the way, Mr. Frost makes his a warm if unsettling place to be. Cracks, clicks, static and organic resonating frequencies sit next to lovingly sampled horns, strings and distorted vocals. With more than a nod in the direction of Phil Spector's 'Wall of Sound' production technique, this dizzying array of possible instrumentation is layered one on top of the other to form an intricate cacophony of noise that on initial listen seems to lack the song structure your ears are used to. The reaction to this music come from your gut - emotional reaction before logical sense is made. The only reason the compositions on this album hang together is a keen knowledge of song structure and, more importantly, when it can be ignored.

Standout track 'The Carpathians' sums up this release perfectly. The main melody is constructed from snarls, howls and yelps, with a wandering frequency violin yowl, one of the best noises in the world - a strings section tuning up - meandering over the top. The fact an almost traditional piano chord sequence is playing underneath merely underpins the weirdness with a tiny element of structure, almost unheard, but tying in the disparate elements. It allows me to describe a looped sample of a wolf snarling as a melody, for example.

I think the main thing I got from its completeness - any given noise, be it harsh or beautiful - fitting together to make something solid, genuine and approaching unique. Listening to it at home is a rewarding challenge, not for all souls, but if you like your music edgy, involved and meticulously made, give this a go.



ANDREYA TRIANA.

SOULFUL SINGER TALKS ABOUT HER UPCOMING DEBUT ALBUM.

INTERVIEW BY SAM WALBY.

ANDREYA TRIANA IS PROBABLY BEST KNOWN FOR HER SOULFUL VOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO 'TEA LEAF DANCERS' FROM FLYING LOTUS' RESET EP, BUT HAS ALSO WORKED WITH SUCH DIGNITARIES AS BONOBO, MR SCRUFF, NATURAL SELF AND KIDKANEVIL.

NOW PREPARING TO RELEASE HER DEBUT SOLO ALBUM ON NINJA TUNE, WRITTEN WITH A BIT OF HELP FROM FINK AND PRODUCED BY BONOBO, SHE TOLD US A BIT ABOUT THE WRITING PROCESS AND HER PLANS TO CAMP OUTSIDE JOOLS HOLLAND'S HOUSE...

YOUR VOICE IS THE MOST STRIKING PART OF YOUR MUSIC. HAVE YOU HAD ANY FORMAL MUSIC TRAINING OR IS IT MOSTLY SELF-TAUGHT?

I've no formal music training and would actually consider myself a bit of a music theory dyslexic. But I've always been a bit of a music obsessive, spending ages dissecting voices, melodies, harmonies and music and developing my own style from there.

DID YOU HAVE A MUSICAL UPBRINGING?

I've definitely come from a family of music lovers. My mum is a fantastic singer and also played steel drum. She always had music blaring in the house and would be dancing about and singing; it was infectious. My grandparents, who are from Jamaica, are habitual singers so you'd always hear them humming church songs while doing the washing up.

YOU APPEAR ON 'THE KEEPER', BONOBO'S NEW SINGLE. DID YOU WRITE THAT SONG TOGETHER?

I think the dynamic works really well with me and Bonobo. For this song I wrote the lyrics and melody and he produced the music, but the roles do cross over and he'll pull me up if he thinks my lyrics sound cheesy.

HOW DID 'TEA LEAF DANCERS', YOUR COLLABORATION WITH FLYING LOTUS, COME ABOUT?

We were both accepted into the Red Bull Music Academy in 2006 in Australia. During that time everyone was collaborating and sharing ideas and that was one of many 'meeting of minds' that came out of the academy that year.

YOU'VE DONE QUITE A LOT OF COLLABORATIONS. DO YOU HAVE ANY MORE IN THE PIPELINE THAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

No, I think I've done a complete u-turn when it comes collaborations. I think working with so many great producers was fantastic and really helped me to find my voice, but now I've found it I just want to spend time developing more as a vocalist and songwriter. It would take something super special for me to collaborate in the near future.

YOU PLAYED AT LIVE8 WITH YOUR OLD BAND BOOTIS IN EDINBURGH IN 2005. WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES OF THAT?

That time seems like a lifetime ago. I remember being quite scared on the day and being back stage and seeing the most ridiculous number of people in the audience. I think we played to 25,000 people that day and my main memory is how much easier that was than playing an intimate gig to 25 people.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH THE WRITING AND RECORDING OF YOUR DEBUT ALBUM?

The album is finished and took a year. I wrote all the songs at home on guitar and took my demos over to Bonobo's studio and we'd work on the songs from there. I took two ideas over to Fink's house and spent a couple of afternoons polishing off the ideas. He's a really talented songwriter and working with him helped me a lot.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE BONOBO TO PRODUCE THE ALBUM?

It just naturally happened that way. He was up for working on some tracks, I really loved his music and I also knew I wanted to work with one person on the album, not loads of producers.

WHEN IS IT LIKELY TO SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY?

I can't wait for the album to be released - it feels like it's been a long time in the making! It will be released next year but there will be three singles beforehand.

WILL IT FEATURE ANY OF YOUR FREEFLO VOCAL-ONLY TRACKS?

No, but there are definitely elements of it that run throughout.

YOUR NEW SINGLE, 'LOST WHERE I BELONG', IS OUT ON DECEMBER 14TH. TELL US A BIT ABOUT THIS SONG.

I co-wrote this track with Fink and it's about getting a bit lost in life. I've always known my purpose in life is to do music and that's never been questionable. But during times of writing the album I had intense doubts about my abilities and if I was actually doing the right thing. I remember times of not being able to pay my rent and thinking to myself 'What the hell are you doing?? Go work in an insurance company or something!' It was quite a turbulent time but it all served a purpose and made for good album material in the end.

HOW IS INDEPENDENCE IMPORTANT TO YOU AS AN ARTIST? CAN YOU IMAGINE EVER SIGNING TO A MAJOR IF THE OPPORTUNITY AROSE?

Independence is fundamental! Ultimately the music has to come from you and if you're forcing yourself into another persona to sell music it can come across as fake and I think people can tell. I've only been with Ninja Tune for a short while but the feeling I get being with an independent label is they're trying to get the best out of me. I also feel free artistically, which also brings out the best in me. To be completely honest I don't see what a major could offer me that I don't get from my label already. I would only consider more established independents such as XL or Domino if the opportunity arose in the future. When I think of majors it makes me think of a shark-infested waters.

WHICH CONTEMPORARY ARTIST(S) DO YOU DRAW MOST INSPIRATION FROM?

I am really inspired by artists with completely honest originality who are true to what they're doing. One that springs to mind is Lykke Li. She blew me away when I saw her live. She's completely in her own little world, just doing her thing, and that's a rare sight nowadays.

WHO SHOULD OUR READERS BE LISTENING TO AT THE MOMENT?

Kidkanevil on First Word Records has just dropped another amazing album. The Invisible are incredible and people should always, always be listening to Donny Hathaway.

YOU SEEM QUITE EXPERIENCED IN THE INDUSTRY FOR SOMEONE SO YOUNG. WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU CAN GIVE TO ASPIRING YOUNG MUSICIANS?

Thanks! Well, I still have heaps and heaps to learn yet. The number one key piece of advice I would give is to simply believe in yourself and keep going no matter what. It sounds simple but is probably the hardest thing to do. Belief in yourself will keep you going when you feel like things aren't moving forward. It will keep you going when you can't pay rent or you face rejection or criticism. Doing music is possibly one of the most all-consuming careers you can have, but also the most rewarding.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE NEAR FUTURE?

To make a beautiful second album! To keep focused and positive and keep things moving forward. I'll also be touring with my band which will be exciting. I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I've decided I want to be on Later with Jools Holland next year, so I'm planning on getting myself a tent and camping outside Jools Holland's house until he says yes.





JON GOMM.

VIRTUOSO GUITARIST TALKS LATIN PERCUSSION & GRUNGE.

INTERVIEW BY JAMES LOCK.

JON GOMM IS ONE OF THE MOST HARDWORKING PERFORMERS GOING. HIS SKILL ON THE GUITAR IS WORLD FAMOUS. HE TOURS INCESSANTLY ACROSS BRITAIN AND EUROPE AND REGULARLY BRINGS CROWDS OF PEOPLE TO THEIR FEET IN AWE. HE WILL BE RELEASING HIS SECOND ALBUM DON'T PANIC IN DECEMBER, SO WE CAUGHT UP WITH HIM FOR A FEW MOMENTS OF HIS TIME TO FIND OUT THE WHYS, HOWS AND WHERE'S OF THIS GIFTED PERFORMER.

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT THE GUITAR IN PARTICULAR THAT FIRST ATTRACTED YOU?

I was actually two years old. My earliest memory is seeing a man on TV playing a beautiful red guitar. (I later learned it was Mark Knopfler from Dire Straits.) I was an odd child. I've been obsessed with the guitar ever since; it's a pretty common affliction. Not sure what the cure is. Maybe listening to Bon Jovi.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR READERS WHO HAVE NOT HEARD YOUR MUSIC, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT YOU DO?

A bloke playing acoustic guitar and singing, but trying to make as many different sounds as he can with the guitar.

WHAT STYLE OR MUSICAL TECHNIQUE ARE YOU CURRENTLY FASCINATED BY?

At the moment I'm listening to Nina Simone a LOT, and also I just bought a book on Latin percussion, although I've been learning about Konnakol, which people might know as the percussive Indian singing. I've also been listening to Michael Rose who is a Jamaican singer. He's inspired me to try to write a dub tune for acoustic guitar.

YOU ARE ABLE TO INCORPORATE A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT SOUNDS INTO YOUR PLAYING, FROM THE PERCUSSIVE TO THE MELODIC. WHAT PROMPTED THE DECISION TO ACHIEVE ALL THIS SOLO, RATHER THAN PLAYING WITH A BAND?

I've played in a lot of bands as a session musician and I'm good at taking orders in that situation. But the notion of democratic creativity in a band appals me, if I'm honest. And I'm not very good at giving orders. So I work best alone.

FOR ME, A LOT OF YOUR SONGS, IN SOME ASPECT AT LEAST, HAVE AN ALMOST GRUNGE FEEL TO THEM – ARE YOU A FAN OF THAT PARTICULAR ERA OF MUSIC?

Oh yeah, I feel massively fortunate to have been a kid in an era when we had Britpop on one side and American grunge on the other side. The level of creativity among the current big 'indie' bands seems kind of pathetic in comparison to Nirvana, Soundgarden, Smashing Pumpkins and Sonic Youth.

I'm quite surprised you said I sound grunge though! Not bad surprised. Good surprised. Isn't grunge in right now? Am I cool? Fuck. This changes everything.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE PROGRESSION YOU HAVE MADE FROM YOUR LAST RELEASE IN 2003?

Massive. The debut album was only ever meant as a short term thing. I basically made it as a demo to get gigs. I recorded it on a multitrack recorder. I didn't even use any mics for recording the guitar; I just plugged it in like I would at a gig. I made it to send to promoters to try to get gigs. I always assumed I'd re-record it but I never had time; the gigs just started getting more and more and further and further afield. Having a new album now, after nearly six years, is a huge weight off my shoulders.

MOST AMUSING EXPERIENCE WHILE PERFORMING LIVE?

I got the oddest heckle ever. A guy shouted: "Shag my wife! Please! Shag my wife!" I laughed, and I said: "Erm.... I don't even know what she looks like" and the lass next to him stood up and said: "Here I am! What do you think?"

AS AN INDEPENDENT MUSICIAN MAKING HIS WAY IN THE WORLD, WHERE DO YOU FIND YOURSELF ON THE PIRATING OF MUSIC VIA THE INTERNET?

Ambivalent. It's a really tricky area. I don't make a moral judgement, but on the other hand it can annoy me when downloaders proclaim things like "filesharing levels the playing field for independent and corporate artists", which is complete bollocks. I don't think filesharing is 'wrong', but it's not some moral campaign for user freedom either.

Hopefully Spotify will kill off the "just-can't-be-arsed-paying-for-anything" aspect of it, but then Spotify have so far paid virtually no royalties to independent labels/artists and have become the subject of quite a lot of suspicion in the independent community, so my new album isn't going on there either!

In a practical sense, I would enormously appreciate it if people BUY my new album! People buying it enables me to do this as my job, which I don't see as my god-given right, but if people think it's worth buying then they should.

WHAT DOES INDEPENDENCE MEAN TO YOU AS AN ARTIST?

Everything. It's like having a day job, with all the organising and admin and nonsense I have to do, but it's worth it to avoid the situation so many of my friends have found themselves in as soon as the pen has left the corporate letterheaded paper.

YOUR PERFORMANCES ARE OFTEN AWE INSPIRING. ANY ADVICE FOR THE FUTURE GOMM PROTÉGÉ?

Ha! Awe literally means fear, and I think in the case of guitarists they can get a bit that way. "I'm going to go home and burn my guitar now!" Virtually every gig someone will say that to me. My main advice is to explore music. We live in a country overflowing with cultures from around the globe; it's amazing the things you can find if you look.

WHERE WILL YOU BE PERFORMING IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS?

Touring Italy for ten days, starting a week from now. I'm always playing around the UK, too many to mention. Just check on the website! I don't have anything booked in Sheffield at the moment though. Promoters: get in touch!

jongomm.com



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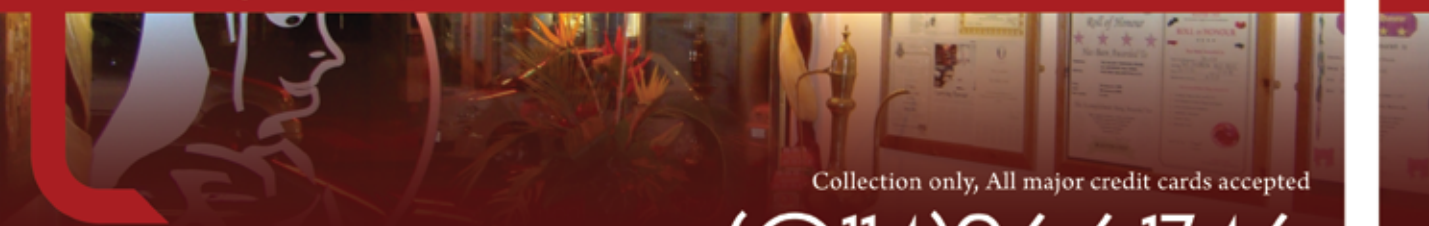
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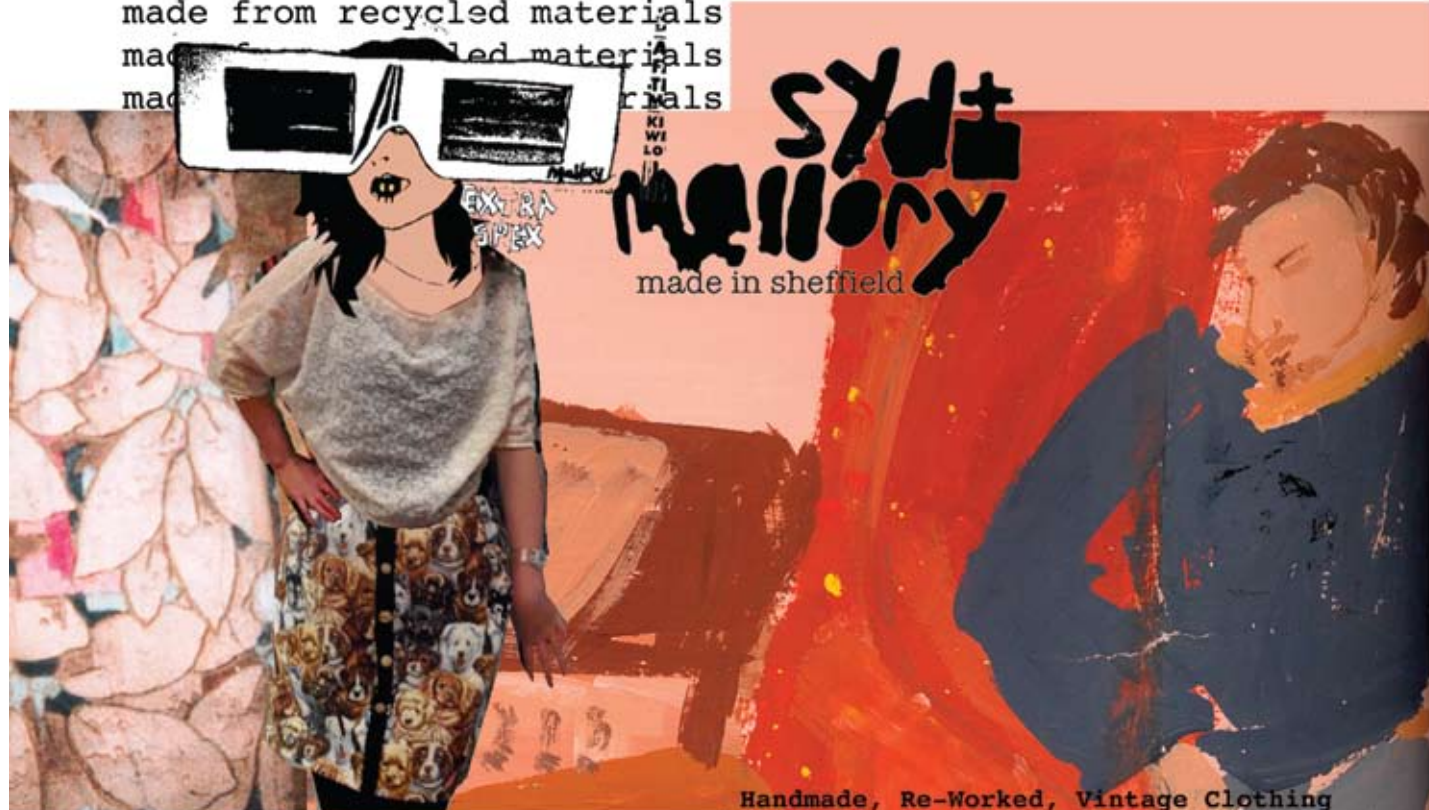
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RERBERG AND TARKOVSKY, THE REVERSE SIDE OF STALKER. REVIEWER - JOÃO PAULO SIMÕES.

“I BELIEVE THE MAJORITY OF YOU WERE ATTRACTED TO THIS DOCUMENTARY THROUGH THE NAME OF TARKOVSKY...”, SAID IGOR MAYBORODA, VIA AN INTERPRETER, AS HE INTRODUCED HIS DOCUMENTARY ‘RERBERG AND TARKOVSKY, THE REVERSE SIDE OF STALKER’ AT LAST MONTH’S SHEFFIELD DOC/FEST 2009.

It was certainly true in my case. Despite the fact that I knew beforehand that this was mostly intended as a praise of Georgi Ivanovich Rerberg, a Russian Director of Photography of remarkable talent, I was perplexed by how much of that praise was to be presented in detriment of filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky’s reputation.

What ensued was an over-long, repetitive victimisation of a man who, as presented in this tendentious documentary, had his glory and international career denied by the conflict with Tarkovsky upon the production of the film Stalker (1979).

The making of this documentary claims to have benefitted from access to various documents and testimonies never seen or heard before. But the case seems to be made more of personal intrigue and biased statements from those who were at some point attached to Stalker or connected to either Rerberg or Tarkovsky. Surely, some of the insights into their methods and behind-the-scenes material are a privilege to watch, but the problem lies in everything that surrounds them and the intent behind each piece of information.

Whilst Rerberg is equated with an orchestra conductor of the kind that interprets the composer’s original intentions and improves on them, Tarkovsky is presented as a director full of artistic doubts and a man easily manipulated by his scheming wife.

The truth that actually matters is that although Rerberg might’ve been the last in a lineage of Russian intellectuals (as the film over-emphasises), it is Tarkovsky (the son of a renowned poet) who carved his name and authentic vision into this often so ungrateful medium.

Their Russian condition is unavoidably brought to the foreground in the film, but it was in Tarkovsky’s career that this was acknowledged and dissected more exquisitely. It pervades all of his films, including the ones made in exile. In fact, it’s in Nostalgia (1983) – his penultimate film, made in Italy – that the above-mentioned aspect takes on a spiritual level. It’s also here that another notion to do with cultural identity is best explored, despite Mayboroda’s unsubtle attempt to bring it to the centre of his documentary.

Nostalgia, which employs a lot of Tarkovsky’s father’s poetry, introduces at a certain point a philosophical discussion about the virtues of translation. The final remark, that poetry above all is untranslatable, implies precisely how much of the artist/poet’s cultural and social condition goes into his work. There’s an entire set of circumstances to do with the time and history surrounding a given work that contribute to its authenticity.

On this same note, what should be remembered and praised is the film Rerberg and Tarkovsky actually made and completed together.

Mirror (1975), which is structured around childhood memories and domestic yearnings, is so absolutely Russian in essence and form that we can only really appreciate it from the outside and be mesmerised by its sheer beauty. With a non-linear narrative and full of abstractions, it still struck a chord of truth with the Russian people. And this is mainly due to the rigorous harmony of Rerberg and Tarkovsky’s collaboration.

What brought them together is therefore far more valuable than what set them apart. This doesn’t make the documentary completely pointless, but almost.

Very few of you would’ve gone to see it last month – and very few will see it ever. Andrei Tarkovsky’s films, though, are out there for posterity.

Having met a direct collaborator of Tarkovsky myself, I know the man was flawed as an individual and often difficult to deal with. But what there is absolutely no doubt about is that the filmmaker was one of a kind. This is an artist who, to put it simply, decoded the cinematic language. He paved the way for all of us and showed us possibilities beyond the aesthetical or technical. He taught us that, as an art-form, film is only pertinent and relevant when it displays an intensely personal backbone. Everything else just follows naturally...

The films of Andrei Tarkovsky are all available on DVD in this country through Artificial Eye.



JOÃO PAULO SIMÕES IS A PORTUGUESE FILMMAKER LIVING AND WORKING INDEPENDENTLY IN SHEFFIELD – HIS WORKS INCLUDE ANTLERS OF REASON AND AN ARRAY OF DOCUMENTARIES. CAPTURAFILMES.BLOGSPOT.COM.

STALKER. (1979) DIRECTOR-ANDREI TARKOVSKY. REVIEWER - OWEN COGAN.

STALKER IS SET IN AN UNSPECIFIED DYSTOPIAN FUTURE. WITHIN THIS FUTURE THERE IS A PLACE CALLED THE ZONE, A GUARDED MILITARY SITE WHERE SUPERNATURAL POWERS HAVE CREATED A ROOM IN WHICH MEN CAN HAVE THEIR DEEPEST YEARNINGS REALISED.

Stalker, a kind of tour-guide/prophet figure, leads two desperate intellectuals referred to simply as Writer and Scientist in search of inspiration and scientific discovery. The three men travel through the dangerous and surreal wasteland looking for salvation in the cruelty of a dying civilization. They argue about humanity, the future, the nature of art and the meaning of life. The film has the sensibility and cutting humour of a Beckett play, but is rendered gentle and dreamlike by its astonishing cinematography. Each of the film’s very slow moving shots greets the viewer like a beautiful but harrowing painting and the close up portraits express the crisis at the heart of the characters’ personalities whilst showing the ageing and ill-kept physicality of their bodies.

Tarkovsky’s film is science fiction in that it is a meditation on the future. It is, however, at its core an attempt to get to grips with the essential nature of human longing and human suffering. By setting the piece in the desolation of a post/pre-apocalyptic future it is likely that Tarkovsky is commenting on the destructive and dehumanising force of totalitarian powers like that of the Soviet Union. More importantly, though, Tarkovsky’s wasteland of the future is a world stripped of cultural and institutional sign posts. The film’s characters are not engaged in the distractions of everyday human affairs. The collective interpretation of community and society is rotting away with organised civilization itself, and when the three characters take leave of the wider world by illegally entering fenced off areas of the zone, their perspectives are stripped of any calming orientation. The film’s protagonists and its audience are left to experience and observe the convoluted mess of phenomena that makes up the characters’ perspectives: a mix of anxieties, memories, desires and impulses.

Stalker is a slow moving but hypnotic film. It is a long metaphorical piece that resists offering a clear message or meaning. As the films characters explore the Zone, Tarkovsky is exploring life, questioning the nature of human motivation and positing the necessity of hope. It is a successful and mesmerising piece of work.

AMERICAN - THE BILL HICKS STORY. DIRECTOR - MATT HARLOCK& PAUL THOMAS. REVIEWER - IMOGEN DECORDOVA.

“EVER NOTICE HOW WE ALWAYS KILL THE GOOD GUYS AND LET THE DEMONS RUN AMOK?”

The self proclaimed “Chomsky with dick jokes”, Bill Hicks was a prophet and philosopher, embittered by religion, American unipolarity and capitalism. I’m yet to come across anyone who wouldn’t agree with his wise musings.

Three years in the making, the film was made by Brits Matt Harlock and Paul Thomas, who were granted the divine right to tell the story of one of comedy’s most iconic figures. This feature length documentary adopts innovative animation techniques, using photos and footage of Hicks’ family and friends to go above and beyond the conventional talking heads set up.

Harlock and Thomas speak to those who knew Hicks best, with each one capturing the essence of Bill with their amusing anecdotes and memories of the fellow. His close family recall his Baptist upbringing, which seemed to be the butt of some of his more extreme material. His childhood friend Dwight Slade reminisces over the duo’s high school days, performing guerrilla routines in front of anyone who happened to be within their perimeter. We’re launched into an animated recreation of the world of Hicks, his beginnings in Houston sneaking out of the house to perform at the Commix Annexe. Perhaps the most impressive footage is 15 year old Hicks performing to a crowd twice his age as the accompanying voiceovers recall his rare observational talent from such an early age.

With the footage of Hicks’ live routines we feel as if we are in the audience - we cringe when he puts down drunken hecklers in the audience and feel almost compelled to shout praise in agreement of his poignant quips. The animation really excels itself during the documentary’s ‘squeeze clean’ third eye segment, recounting Hicks experiences with magic mushrooms and going hand in hand with his liberal take on the ‘war on drugs’.

A notorious chain smoker, the documentary deals with Hicks’ struggle with alcohol and pancreatic cancer without too much unnecessary hyperbole and sentimentality, culminating with footage of his last show in New York in 1994, just before his untimely death at the age of 32.

As one friend puts it (and as is so often the case with reluctant heroes), if Hicks was able to see the messianic status he’s been afforded in the entertainment industry he’d either find it highly amusing or disgusting, but as biographic documentaries go, American... is a much-needed celebration of Hicks’ life and philosophy, the vital importance of which in this day and age I cannot stress enough. After all, it’s just a ride.

Due for commercial release in 2010.





THE WICK AT BOTH ENDS. 149-151 WEST STREET.

THE WICK AT BOTH ENDS IS A COSY DEN OF A BAR LOCATED ON WEST STREET. THE BUILDING IN QUESTION HAS HOUSED THE LIKES OF MUSE AND THEN LATER DOGMA. WE ARE PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO SAY THE WICK IS A STEP UP – AND IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

Part of the Harley family, the space is warm, and comfortable, lit with fairy lights perfect for that incoming alcoholic haze. This is not your usual West Street haunt - the music is varied and well-chosen while the seating caters for corners and huddling out of the winter cold with friends. However, the Wick (as it will undoubtedly become known) does have a couple of tricks up its sleeve for the unassuming punter. Most notable of these is its own uniquely brewed ale. It also serves some of the best cocktails in town.

The Wick at Both Ends prides itself on the quality of its bar team. Master barman Frankie used to run Harvey Nichols and Hilton's Cloud 23 and the team will go out of their way to serve a custom-made drink especially for you. We were rather enamoured with the Gretel – you can eat the petals off the flower at the end. Twee, but who cares.

Music-wise the Wick starts the week with Rent Party - Blues Tuesdays, while Wednesdays are about to commence with a regular Madhatters Tea Party. Think riddles, music and a teapot of shots. When Thursday rocks up, the Wick throw on music of local fame, featuring a variety of bands and guest DJs. If you're interested in playing, get in touch.

If you're out and about on West St and it's getting a little depressing, we'd recommend a drop in at the Wick to refuel and reassure oneself that there is more to life than pop tarts and Lambrini.



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Owner and artist Neil says: "We were constantly annoyed at seeing great designs but not knowing who was behind them, so Royal Stock ensures that all artists are known, and we hope people take the time to check out their works and support them."

Royal Stock sets out with the expressed intention of providing a walking canvas for great artists to put their works on. The whole purpose of Royal Stock is to promote amazing artists from all over the world. They've had local talent from Phlegm Comics and Lord Bunn, as well as amazing international artists like Derek Ballard (Juxtapoz/Seibei), ARK (his only ever T-shirt; his canvasses sell for £2000+), the fantastic comic book artist Josh Kemble and renowned tattooist and all-round dude Kev Grey, to name but a few.

After a quiet spell over the past few months, Royal Stock is kickstarting with new lines and designs from some of the best artists in Sheffield. Rich pickings such as Phlegm, Lord Bunn, Geo Law, Jim Connelly, Emma Pud, Nick Deakin and Tom Newell. All shirts are pretty limited edition and will be available online and from select Sheffield outlets - The Old Sweet Shop in Netheredge and new store The Bakery in the Forum shops.

For a short time only T's will come in a special screenprinted box. So get in early.

FAVOURITES.

OUR PICK OF THE BUNCH.

NEW YORK DELI. 6 COMMONSIDE, NORTON, S10. THENEWYORKDELI.CO.UK.

New York Deli is located up in Commonside on the way into Walkley, opposite the Springvale Tavern. Owned and run by a former chef, it sells a variety of bagels such as pastrami & gerkin, cream cheese & smoked salmon and peanut butter & jelly. Also on the menu are New York-style hot dogs, American pancakes, fresh paninis, a large range of hot and cold sandwiches, a variety of coffees and American rarities like pretzels, Reeses and Hershey snacks.

The deli is stylishly themed throughout with photos of New York cityscapes and a range of menu ingredients to match. This unique little venture is the product of a lot of love and a fondness for the American big deli style. For that alone, it's worth a visit and a little Sheffield patronage.

FANCIE. FITZWILLIAM STREET. DQSHEFFIELD.COM

Shall I compare thee to a perfect day?
Thou art more cake-filled and more heavenly.
Delicate china the only true way
To serve your cupcakes, with coffee and tea.
No finer afternoon could e'er be spent
Indulging the sweet joy of tea parties!
Ne'er have I left without feeling content
Each flavour created solely to please.

Many weary souls have entered your door
To leave with light hearts and a box of cakes.
Gifts for their friends, for the office and more
Such pleasure each sumptuous bite awakes!

I stand not alone in adoration
Fancie, you are a lovely creation.

(They also deliver cakes to your home.
Tea parties can be held both in the shop and at other venues.)

RARE AND RACY. 164/166 DEVONSHIRE STREET. RAREANDRACY.CO.UK.

Rare and Racy is located on Devonshire Street at the base of Division Street. It is without a shadow of a doubt one of our favourite Sheffield haunts. Rare and Racy sells books and art of all shapes, sizes and price brackets for either student or collector. It is also a champion of blues, jazz, improv, folk, electronica, noise and any other non-commercial, contemporary form of music. Add to this the smell of incense, age and calm and you get close to realising what a wonderful place this is. All local independent businesses need our support over Christmas. Please make an effort to spend your money tokens in shops that deserve them. This is such a place.

DQ. FITZWILLIAM STREET. DQSHEFFIELD.COM

DQ is one of the best venues in the city for independent music of all kinds. They've got indie/miscellaneousness with Threads, hip hop/breaks from Suckerpunch, electro/ techno/disco via Club Pony, bassline/garage/baltimore/bashment courtesy of Bigger Than Barry, techno/house provided by Fragment & Charged and dubstep/fidget chez Krooked & Wonk. They are taking bookings for nights and private functions in the main room and Upstairs bar.

There are also undergoing a big refurbishment so get down there and check it out.

Pass the Red Stripe.

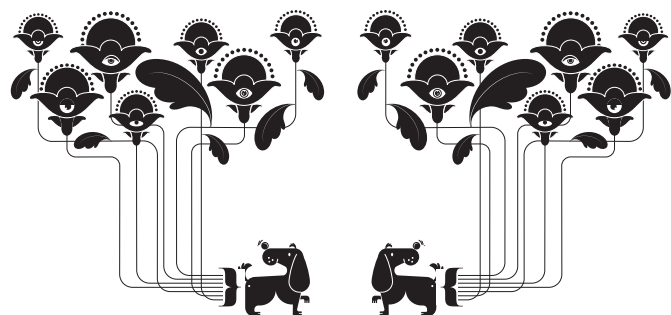
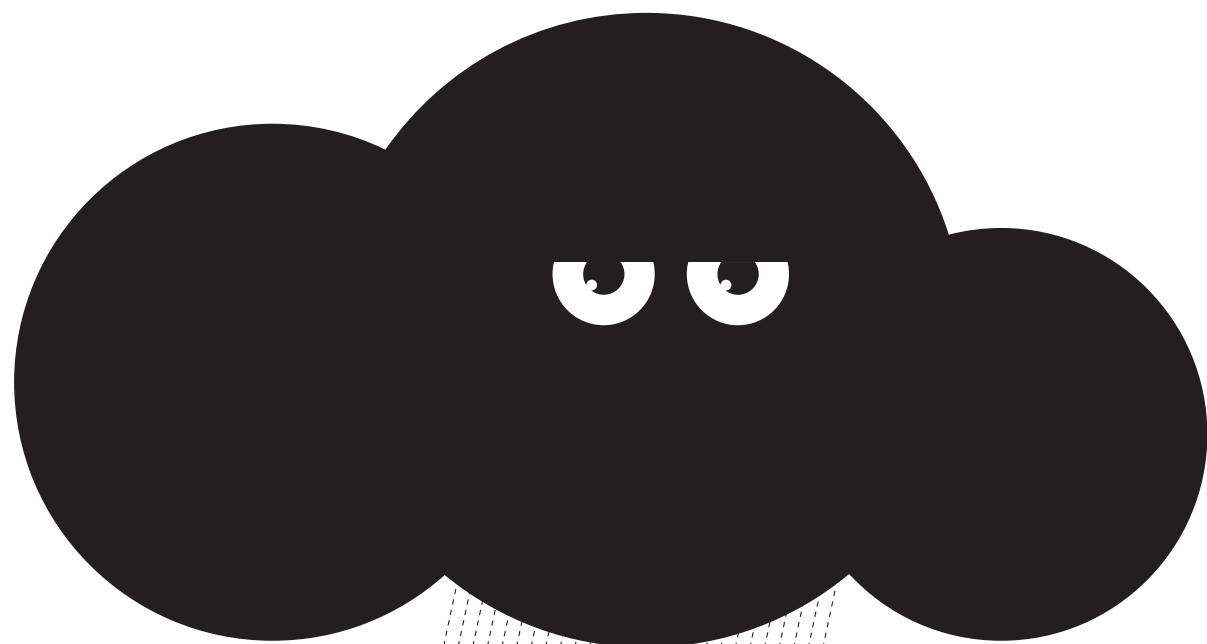
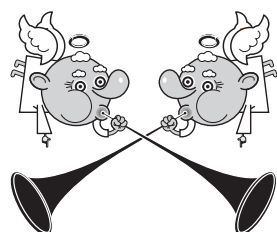
THE SHEAF VIEW. 0114 2496455. 25 GLEADLESS ROAD.

Known for its hospitable atmosphere and good blend of clientele, the Sheaf is another Sheffield institution that deserves a more regular mention in this mag.

Located just off the London Road South and Broadfield Road junction, it boasts a great rotation of five guest ales that range from easy-sup session strength to 7.5% plus, on top of mainstays like Kelham Island's glorious Easy Rider, which is so ludicrously cheap at £1.85 you feel like you've cheated them somehow. Lagers are a bit more pricey but are worth it. No Carling nonsense here.

The Sheaf is open from 12 till 11 every day and is a retreat for the hardworking people of Heeley. As one online review so poignantly stated, "tough to beat".





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